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A VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD
SOUTH AMERICA

JULES VERNE

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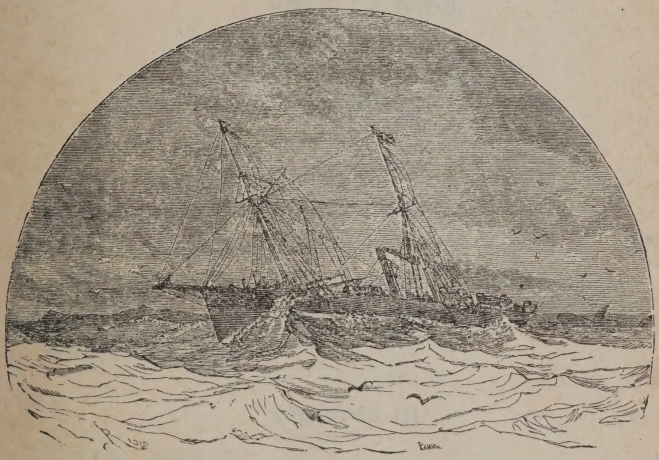
A VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD

By JULES VERNE

AUTHOR OF "THE ENGLISH AT THE NORTH POLE,"
"THE FIELD OF ICE" ETC. ETC.

SOUTH AMERICA



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A VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

THE BALANCE-FISH.

ON the 26th of July, 1864, a magnificent yacht was steaming along the North Channel at full speed, with a strong breeze blowing from the N.E. The Union Jack was flying at the mizen-mast, and a blue standard, bearing the initials E. G., embroidered in gold, and surmounted by a ducal coronet, floated from the topgallant head of the mainmast. The name of the yacht was the *Duncan*, and the owner was Lord Glenarvan, one of the sixteen Scotch peers who sit in the Upper House, and the most distinguished member of the Royal Thames Yacht Club, so famous throughout the United Kingdom.

Lord Edward Glenarvan was on board with his young wife, Lady Helena, and one of his cousins, Major McNabbs.

The *Duncan* was newly built, and had been making a trial trip a few miles outside the Frith of Clyde.

was returning to Glasgow, and the Isle of Arran already loomed in the distance, when the sailor on watch caught sight of an enormous fish sporting in the wake of the ship. Lord Edward, who was immediately apprised of the fact, came up on the poop a few minutes after with his cousin, and asked John Mangles, the captain, what sort of animal he thought it was.

"Well, since your Lordship asks my opinion," said Mangles, "I think it is a shark, and a fine large one, too."

"A shark on these shores!"

"There is nothing at all improbable in that," returned the captain. "This fish belongs to a species that is found in all latitudes and in all seas. It is the 'balance-fish,' or hammer-headed shark, if I am not much mistaken. But if your Lordship has no objection, and it would give the smallest pleasure to Lady Helena to see a novelty in the way of fishing, we'll soon haul up the monster and find out what it really is."

"What do you say, McNabbs? Shall we try to catch it?" asked Lord Glenarvan.

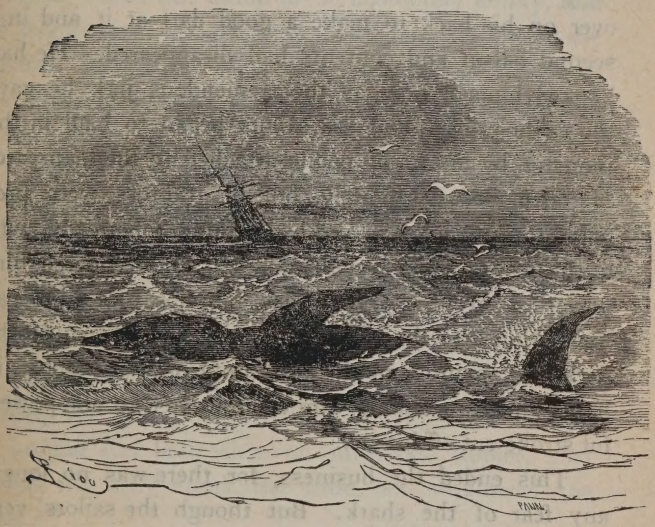
"If you like; it's all one to me," was his cousin's cool reply.

"The more of those terrible creatures that are killed the better, at all events," said John Mangles, "so let's seize the chance, and it will not only give us a little diversion, but be doing a good action."

"Very well, set to work, then," said Glenarvan.

Lady Helena soon joined her husband on deck, quite charmed at the prospect of such exciting sport.

The sea was splendid, and every movement of the shark was distinctly visible. In obedience to the captain's orders, the sailors threw a strong rope over the starboard of the yacht, with a big hook at the end of it, concealed in a thick lump of bacon. The bait took at once, though the shark was full fifty yards dis-



tant. He began to make rapidly for the yacht, beating the waves violently with his fins, and keeping his caudal appendage in a perfectly straight line. The fins were grey at the extremity, and black at the base; and as he got nearer, his great projecting eyes could be seen inflamed with greed, and his gaping jaws with their quadruple row of teeth. His head was large, and

shaped like a double hammer at the end of a handle. John Mangles was right. This was evidently a balance-fish—the most voracious of all the *squalidæ* species.

The passengers and sailors on the yacht were watching all the animal's movements with the liveliest interest. He soon came within reach of the bait, turned over on his back to make a good dart at it, and in a second bacon and contents had disappeared. He had hooked himself now, as the tremendous jerk he gave the cable proved, and the sailors began to haul in the monster by means of tackle attached to the mainyard. He struggled desperately, but his captors were prepared for his violence, and had a long rope ready, with a slip knot, which caught his tail and rendered him powerless at once. In a few minutes more, he was hoisted up over the side of the yacht and thrown on the deck. A man came forward immediately, hatchet in hand, and approaching him cautiously, with one powerful stroke cut off his tail.

This ended the business, for there was no longer any fear of the shark. But though the sailors' vengeance was satisfied, their curiosity was not; they knew the brute had no very delicate appetite, and the contents of his stomach might be worth investigation. This is the common practice on all ships when a shark is captured, but Lady Glenarvan declined to be present at such a disgusting exploration, and withdrew to the cabin again. The fish was still breathing; it measured ten feet in length, and weighed more than six hundred

pounds. This was nothing extraordinary, for though the hammer-headed shark is not classed among the most gigantic of the species, it is always reckoned among the most formidable.

The huge brute was soon ripped up in a very unceremonious fashion. The hook had fixed right in the stomach, which was found to be absolutely empty, and the disappointed sailors were just going to throw the remains overboard, when the boatswain's attention was attracted by some large object sticking fast in one of the viscera.

"I say! what's this?" he exclaimed.

"That!" replied one of the sailors, "why, it's a piece of rock the beast swallowed by way of ballast."

"It is just a bullet, neither more nor less, that the fellow has got in his inside, and couldn't digest," said another.

"Hold your tongues, all of you!" said Tom Austin, the mate of the *Duncan*. "Don't you see the animal has been such an inveterate tippler, that he has not only drank the wine but swallowed the bottle?"

"What!" said Lord Glenarvan. "Do you mean to say it is a bottle that the shark has got in his stomach?"

"Ay, it is a bottle, most certainly," replied the boatswain, "but not just from the cellar."

"Well, Tom, be careful how you take it out," said Lord Glenarvan, "for bottles found in the sea often contain precious documents."

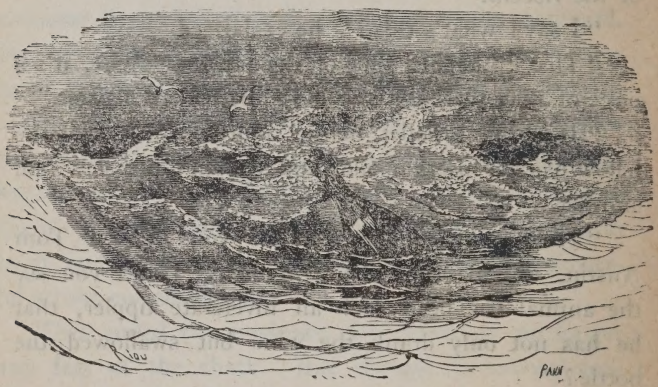
"Do you think this does?" said Major McNabbs, incredulously.

"It possibly may, at any rate."

"Oh! I'm not saying it doesn't. There may perhaps be some secret in it," returned the Major.

"That's just what we're to see," said his cousin. "Well, Tom."

"Here it is," said the mate, holding up a shapeless lump he had managed to pull out, though with some difficulty.



"Get the filthy thing washed then, and bring it to the cabin."

Tom obeyed, and in a few minutes brought in the bottle and laid it on the table, at which Lord Glenarvan and the Major were sitting ready with the captain, and, of course, Lady Helena, for women, they say, are always a little curious.

Everything is an event at sea. For a moment they

all sat silent, gazing at this frail relic, wondering if it told the tale of a sad disaster, or brought some trifling message from a frolic-loving sailor, who had flung it into the sea to amuse himself when he had nothing better to do.

However, the only way to know was to examine the bottle, and Glenarvan set to work without further delay so carefully and minutely, that he might have been taken for a coroner making an inquest.

He commenced by a close inspection of the outside. The neck was long and slender, and round the thick rim there was still an end of wire hanging, though eaten away with rust. The sides were very thick, and strong enough to bear great pressure. It was evidently of Champagne origin, and the Major said immediately:

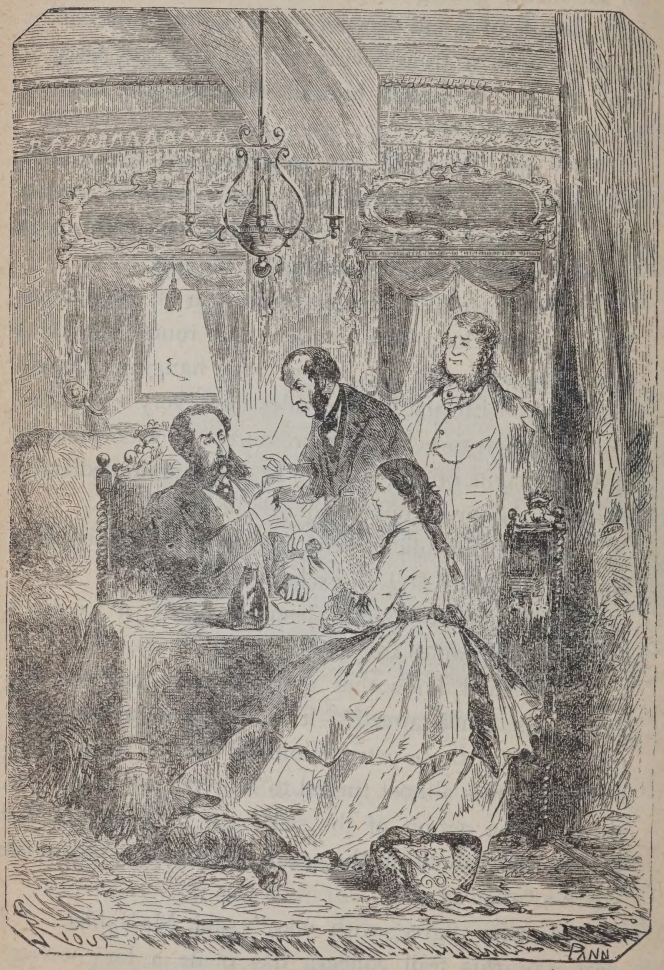
"That's one of our Clicquot's bottles."

Nobody contradicted him, as he was supposed to know; but Lady Helena exclaimed:

"What does it matter about the bottle, if we don't know were it comes from?"

"We shall know that too, presently, and we may affirm this much already—it comes from a long way off. Look at those petrifactions all over it, these different substances almost turned to mineral, we might say, through the action of the salt water! This waif had been tossing about in the ocean a long time before the shark swallowed it."

"I quite agree with you," said McNabbs. "I dare say this frail concern has made a long vovage, protected by this strong covering."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"But I want to know where from?" said Lady Glenarvan.

"Wait a little, dear Helena, wait: we must have patience with bottles; but if I am not much mistaken, this one will answer all our questions," replied her husband, beginning to scrape away the hard substances round the neck. Soon the cork made its appearance, but much damaged by the water.

"That's vexing," said Lord Edward, "for if papers are inside, they'll be in a pretty state!"

"It's to be feared they will," said the Major.

"But it is a lucky thing the shark swallowed them, I must say," added Glenarvan, "for the bottle would have sunk to the bottom before long with such a cork as this."

"That's true enough," replied John Mangles, "and yet it would have been better to have fished them up in the open sea. Then we might have found out the road they had come, by taking the exact latitude and longitude, and studying the atmospheric and submarine currents; but with such a postman as a shark, that goes against wind and tide, there's no clue whatever to the starting-point."

"We shall see," said Glenarvan, gently taking out the cork. A strong odour of salt water pervaded the whole saloon, and Lady Helena asked impatiently:

"Well, what is there?"

"I was right!" exclaimed Glenarvan. "I see papers inside. But I fear it will be impossible to remove them," he added, "for they appear to have rotted

with the damp, and are sticking to the sides of the bottle."

"Break it," said the Major.

"I would rather preserve the whole if I could."

"No doubt you would," said Lady Helena; "but the contents are more valuable than the bottle, and we had better sacrifice the one than the other."

"If your Lordship would simply break off the neck, I think we might easily withdraw the papers," suggested John Mangles.

"Try it, Edward, try it," said Lady Helena.

Lord Glenarvan was very unwilling, but he found there was no alternative; the precious bottle must be broken. They had to get a hammer before this could be done though, for the stony material had acquired the hardness of granite. A few sharp strokes, however, soon shivered it to fragments, many of which had pieces of paper sticking to them. These were carefully removed by Lord Glenarvan, and separated and spread out on the table before the eager gaze of his wife and friends.

CHAPTER II.

THE THREE DOCUMENTS.

All that could be discovered, however, on these pieces of paper was a few words here and there, the remainder of the lines being almost completely obliterated by the action of the water. Lord Glenarvan examined them attentively for a few minutes, turning them over on all sides, holding them up to the light, and trying to decipher the least scrap of writing, while the others looked on with anxious eyes. At last he said:

"There are three distinct documents here, apparently copies of the same document in three different languages. Here is one in English, one in French, and one in German."

"But can you make any sense out of them?" asked Lady Helena.

"That's hard to say, my dear Helena, the words are quite incomplete."

"Perhaps the one may supplement the other," suggested Major McNabbs.

"Very likely they will," said the captain. "It is impossible that the very same words should have been

effaced in each document, and by putting the scraps together we might gather some intelligible meaning out of them."

"That's what we will do," rejoined Lord Glenarvan; "but let us proceed methodically. Here is the English document first."

All that remained of it was the following:—

62		*Bri*		*gow*
sink				*stra*
	aland			
	skipp	*Gr*		
			that monit	*of long*
and				*ssistance*
	lost			

"There's not much to be made out of that," said the Major, looking disappointed.

"No, but it is good English, anyhow," returned the captain.

"There's no doubt of it," said Glenarvan. "The words *sink, aland, that, lost,* are entire, *skipp* is evidently part of the word *skipper,* and that's what they call ship-captains often in England. There seems a Mr. Gr. mentioned, and that most likely is the captain of the ship-wrecked vessel."

"Well, come, we have made out a good deal already," said Lady Helena.

"Yes, but unfortunately there are whole lines want-

ing," said the Major; "and we have neither the name of the ship nor the place where she was shipwrecked."

"We'll get that by and by," said Edward.

"Oh yes, there is no doubt of it," replied the Major, who always echoed his neighbour's opinion. "But how?"

"By comparing one document with the other."

"Let us try them," said his wife.

The second piece of paper was even more destroyed than the first, only a few scattered words remained here and there.

It ran as follows:—

7 Juni		*Glas*
	zwei	*atrosen*
		graus
		bringt ihnen

"This is written in German," said John Mangles, the moment he looked at it.

"And you understand that language, don't you?" asked Lord Glenarvan.

"Perfectly."

"Come, then, tell us the meaning of these words."

The captain examined the document carefully and said—

"Well, here's the date of the occurrence first; 7 *Juni* means June 7th, and if we put that before the figures 62 we have in the other document, it gives us the exact date, *7th of June*, 1862."

"Capital!" exclaimed Lady Helena. "Go on, John!"

"On the same line," resumed the young captain, "there is the syllable *Glas*, and if we add that to the *gow* we found in the English paper, we get the whole word *Glasgow* at once. The documents evidently refer to some ship that sailed out of the port of Glasgow."

"That is my opinion too," said the Major.

"The second line is completely effaced," continued the captain, "but here are two important words on the third. There is *zwei* which means *two*, and *atrosen* or *matrosen*, the German for *sailors*."

"Then I suppose it is about a captain and two sailors," said Lady Helena.

"It seems so," replied Lord Glenarvan.

"I must confess, your Lordship, that the next word puzzles me. I can make nothing of it. Perhaps the third document may throw some light on it. The last two words are plain enough. *Bringt ihnen* means *bring them*; and if you recollect in the English paper, we had *ssistance*, so by putting the parts together, it reads thus, I think, *Bring them assistance*."

"Yes, that must be it," replied Lord Glenarvan. "But where are the poor fellows. We have not the slightest indication of the place meantime, nor of where the catastrophe happened."

"Perhaps the French copy will be more explicit," suggested Lady Helena.

"Here it is then," said Lord Glenarvan, "and that is in a language we all know."

The words it contained were these—

troi	*ats*	*tannia*
	gonie	*austral*
		abor
contin	*pr*	*cruel indi*
jeté		*ongit*
et 37° 11″	*lat*	

"There are figures!" exclaimed Lady Helena. "Look!"

"Let us go steadily to work," said Lord Glenarvan, "and begin at the beginning. I think we can make out from the incomplete words in the first line that a three-mast vessel is in question, and there is little doubt about the name; we get that from the fragments of the other papers; it is the *Britannia*. As to the next two words, *gonie* and *austral*, it is only *austral* that has any meaning to us."

"But that is a valuable scrap of information," said John Mangles. "The shipwreck occurred in the Southern hemisphere."

"That's a wide word!" said the Major.

"Well, we'll go on," resumed Glenarvan. "Here

is the word *abor;* that is clearly the root of the verb *aborder.* The poor men have landed somewhere, but where? *Contin,* does that mean continent? *cruel!*"

"*Cruel!*" interrupted John Mangles. "I see now what *graus* is part of in the second document. It is *grausam,* the word in German for *cruel.*"

"Let's go on," said Lord Glenarvan, becoming quite excited over his task, as the incomplete words began to fill up and develope their meaning. "*Indi,* is it India where they have been shipwrecked? And what can this word *ongit* be part of? Ah! I see, it is *longitude,* and here is the latitude, 37° 11″. That is the precise indication at last, then!"

"But we haven't the longitude," objected McNabbs.

"But we can't get everything, my dear Major, and it is something, at all events, to have the exact latitude. The French document is decidedly the most complete of the three, but it is plain enough that each is the literal translation of the other, for they all contain exactly the same number of lines. What we have to do now, is to put together all the words we have found, and translate them into one language, and try to ascertain their most probable and logical sense."

"Well, what language shall we choose?" asked the Major.

"I think we had better keep to the French, since that was the most complete document of the three."

"Your Lordship is right," said John Mangles, and besides, we're all familiar with the language."

"Very well, then, I'll set to work."

In a few minutes he had written as follows—

*7 Juin 1862 trois-mâts Britannia Glasgow sombré gonie austral à terre deux matelots capitaine Gr abor contin pr cruel indi jeté ce document de longitude et 37° 11″ de latitude Portez-leur secours perdus.**

Just at that moment one of the sailors came to inform the captain that they were about entering the Frith of Clyde, and to ask what were his orders.

"What are your Lordship's intentions?" said John Mangles, addressing Lord Glenarvan.

"To get to Dumbarton as quickly as possible, John; and Lady Helena will return to Malcolm Castle, while I go on to London and lay this document before the Admiralty."

The sailor received orders accordingly, and went out to deliver them to the mate.

---

* 7th of June, 1862 three-mast Britannia Glasgow foundered gonie Southern on the coast two sailors Captain Gr landed contin pr cruel indi thrown this document in longitude and 37° 11″ latitude Bring them assistance lost.

"Now friends," said Lord Glenarvan; "let us go on with our investigations, for we are on the track of a great catastrophe, and the lives of several human beings depend on our sagacity. We must give our whole minds to the solution of this enigma."

"First of all, there are three very distinct things to be considered in this document: the things we know—the things we may conjecture—the things we do not know."

"What are those we know? We know that on the 7th of June a three-mast vessel, the *Britannia* of Glasgow, foundered; that two sailors and the captain threw this document into the sea in 37° 11″ latitude; and they entreat help."

"Exactly so," said the Major.

"What are those now we may conjecture?" continued Glenarvan. "That the shipwreck occurred in the southern seas; and here I would draw your attention at once to the incomplete word *gonie*. Doesn't the name of the country strike you even in the mere mention of it?"

"Patagonia!" exclaimed Lady Helena.

"Undoubtedly."

"But is Patagonia crossed by the 37th parallel?" asked the Major.

"That is easily ascertained," said the captain, opening a map of South America. "Yes, it is; Patagonia just touches the 37th parallel. It cuts through Araucania, goes along over the Pampas to the north, and loses itself in the Atlantic."

"Well, let us proceed then with our conjectures. The two sailors and the captain *land*—land where? *Contin*—on a continent; on a continent, mark you, not an island. What becomes of them? There are two letters here providentially which give a clue to their fate—*pr*, that must mean prisoners, and *cruel Indien* is evidently the meaning of the next two words. These unfortunate men are captives in the hands of cruel Indians. Don't you see it? Don't the words seem to come of themselves, and fill up the blanks? Isn't the document quite clear now? Isn't the sense self-evident?"

Glenarvan spoke in a tone of absolute conviction, and his enthusiastic confidence appeared contagious, for the others all exclaimed too, "Yes, it is evident, quite evident."

After an instant, Lord Edward said again, "To my own mind the hypothesis is so plausible, that I have no doubt whatever the event occurred on the coast of Patagonia, but still I will have inquiries made in Glasgow, as to the destination of the *Britannia*, and we shall know if it is possible she could have been wrecked on those shores."

"Oh, there's no need to send so far to find out that," said John Mangles. "I have the 'Mercantile and Shipping Gazette' here, and we'll see the name on the list, and all about it."

"Do look at once, then," said Lady Glenarvan.

The file of papers for the year 1862 was soon brought, and John began to turn over the leaves rapidly,

running down each page with his eye in search of the name required. But his quest was not long, for in a few minutes he called out—

"I've got it! 'May 30th, 1862, Peru-Callao, with cargo for Glasgow, the *Britannia*, Captain Grant.'"

"Grant!" exclaimed Lord Glenarvan. "That is the adventurous Scotchman that attempted to found a new Scotland on the shores of the Pacific."

"Yes," rejoined John Mangles, "it is the very man. He sailed from Glasgow in the *Britannia* in 1861, and has not been heard of since."

"There isn't a doubt of it, not a shadow of a doubt," repeated Lord Glenarvan. "It is just that same Captain Grant. The *Britannia* left Callao on the 30th of May, and on the 7th of June, a week afterwards, she is lost on the coast of Patagonia. The few broken disjointed words we find in these documents tell us the whole story. You see, friends, our conjectures hit the mark very well; we know all now except one thing, and that is the longitude."

"That is not needed now we know the country. With the latitude alone, I would engage to go right to the place where the wreck happened."

"Then have we really all the particulars now?" asked Lady Helena.

"All, dear Helena; I can fill up every one of these blanks the sea has made in the document as easily as if Captain Grant were dictating to me."

And he took up the pen, and dashed off the following lines immediately—

"On the 7th of June, 1862, the three-mast vessel, *Britannia,* of Glasgow, has sunk on the coast of Patagonia, in the southern hemisphere. Making for the shore, two sailors and Captain Grant are about to land on the continent, where they will be taken prisoners by cruel Indians. They have thrown this document into the sea, in longitude , and latitude 37° 11″. Bring them assistance or they are lost."

"Capital! capital! dear Edward," said Lady Helena. "If those poor creatures ever see their native land again, it is you they will have to thank for it."

"And they will see it again," returned Lord Glenarvan; "the statement is too explicit, and clear, and certain for England to hesitate about going to the aid of her three sons cast away on a desert coast. What she has done for Franklin and so many others, she will do to-day for these poor shipwrecked fellows of the *Britannia.*"

"Most likely the unfortunate men have families who mourn their loss. Perhaps this ill-fated Captain Grant had a wife and children," suggested Lady Helena.

"Very true, my dear, and I'll not forget to let them know that there is still hope. But now, friends, we had better go up on deck, as the boat must be getting near the harbour."

He was right, for the *Duncan* had put on steam, and was just passing the Isle of Bute, leaving Rothesay on the starboard, with its charming little town lying in the fertile valley. On she went through the narrowing frith up to Greenock, where she turned off for Dumbarton.

and at six o'clock in the evening dropped anchor at the foot of the basaltic rock, beneath the far-famed Castle of Wallace, one of Scotland's heroes.

A carriage and post-horses waited there, in readiness to convey Lady Helena and Major McNabbs to

Malcolm Castle, and Lord Glenarvan bade adieu to his young wife, and jumped into the express train for Glasgow.

But before starting, he confided an important missive to a swifter agent than himself, and a few minutes

afterwards it flashed along the electric wire to London, to appear next day in the "Times" and "Morning Chronicle" in the following words:—

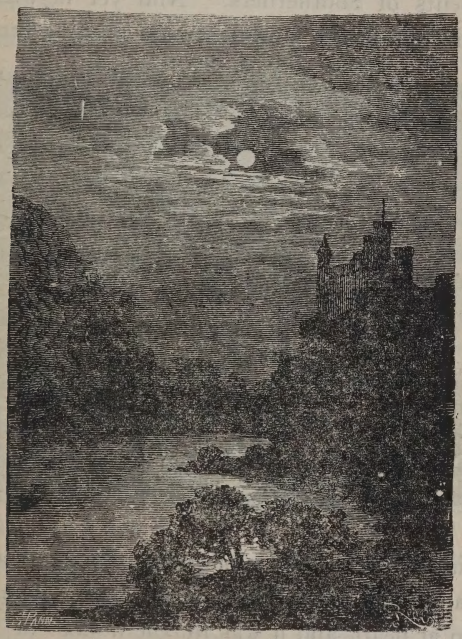
"*For information respecting the fate of the three-mast vessel* BRITANNIA, *of Glasgow, Captain Grant, apply to Lord Glenarvan, Malcolm Castle, Luss, Dumbartonshire. Scotland.*"

CHAPTER III.

MALCOLM CASTLE.

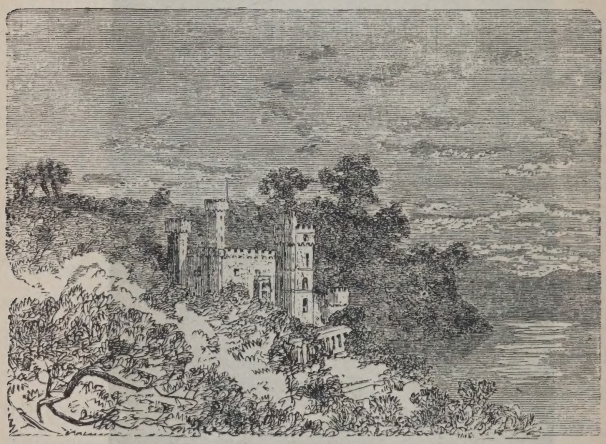
MALCOLM CASTLE, one of the most poetic in all the Highlands, is near the village of Luss, and commands the lovely valley of that name. The limpid waters of Loch Lomond bathe its granite walls, and from time immemorial it has belonged to the Glenarvan family, who have always kept up the hospitable customs of Walter Scott's heroes as befits the land of Rob Roy and Fergus McIvor. During the social revolution which took place in Scotland, a great many clansmen who could not pay their rents to their chieftains were summarily ejected from their farms, and numbers died of starvation, while others became fishermen or emigrated. The cry of despair rose on all sides, but the lords of Glenarvan remained true to their tenantry. Not one of their clan was driven out from the old homestead, not one left the land where his forefathers slept, and the consequence was, that, when there came a time of general disaffection and disunion, Malcolm Castle needed no guard—its own servants were defence enough, and every one of them was Scotch, as were also all the

men on board the *Duncan*. They were the descendants of McGregors, and McFarlanes, and McNabbs, and McNaughtons, true sons of Stirling and Dumbarton, all leal and brave, devoted body and soul to their master, and some of them still speaking the ancient Gaelic of their country.



Lord Glenarvan's fortune was enormous, and he spent it entirely in doing good. His kindheartedness was even greater than his generosity, for the one knew no bounds, while the other, of necessity, had its limits. As lord of Luss and "laird" of Malcolm, he repre-

sented his county in the House of Lords; but, with his Jacobite ideas, he did not care much for the favour of the House of Hanover, and he was looked upon coldly by the State party in England, because of the tenacity with which he clung to the traditions of his forefathers, and his energetic resistance to the political encroachments of Southerners. And yet he was not a man behind the times, and there was nothing little or



narrow-minded about him; but while always keeping open his ancestral county to progress, he was a true Scotchman at heart, and it was for the honour of Scotland that he competed in the yacht races of the Royal Thames Yacht Club.

Edward Glenarvan was thirty-two years of age. He was tall in person, and had rather stern features; but there was an exceeding sweetness in his look, and a

stamp of Highland poetry about his whole bearing. He was known to be brave to excess, and full of daring and chivalry—a Fergus of the nineteenth century; but his goodness excelled every other quality, and he was more charitable than St. Martin himself, for he would have given the whole of his cloak to any of the poor Highlanders.

He had scarcely been married three months, and his bride was Miss Helena Tuffnell, the daughter of William Tuffnell, the great traveller, one of the many victims of geographical science and of the passion for discovery.

Miss Helena did not belong to a noble family, but she was Scotch, and that was better than all nobility in the eyes of Lord Glenarvan; and she was, moreover, a charming, high-souled, religious young woman. She was an orphan, living alone and almost unprovided for in her father's house in Kilpatrick, where he first met her. He saw that she would make an excellent wife, and married her. She was twenty-two years of age, a fair young creature, with eyes as blue as the waters of a Scottish loch on a fine spring morning. Her love for her husband was far beyond her gratitude. It was as if they had changed places, and she had been the rich heiress and he the poor lonely orphan. As to his tenants and retainers, they would have laid down their lives for her they called "Our good lady of Luss."

Lord Glenarvan and Lady Helena lived very happily at Malcolm Castle for the first few months after their marriage, wandering about the loch, beneath the thick shades of the chestnuts and sycamores that skirted its

margin, where the echoes of the ancient pibroch still fell on the ear, borne down on the breeze from the distant mountain gorges; or they would ramble in the woods of birch and larch, or roam over the wide moors covered with golden furze. Sometimes also, they would climb the steep heights of Ben Lomond, or mount their horses and canter through the silent glens,

exploring and discovering new beauties, and going over all the celebrated sites which had been so gloriously sung by Sir Walter Scott, always learning better to know and admire that poetic country which is still called "the land of Rob Roy." When evening came, and the shades of night began to fall, they sauntered along the battlements, or sat down on some solitary stone, in pensive silence, and remained there for hours beneath

the pale moonlight, lost in blissful musings, and like all true lovers, oblivious of all the world beside—each all in all to the other.

But Lord Glenarvan did not forget that his wife was the daughter of a great traveller, and he thought it likely that she would inherit her father's predilections. He had the *Duncan* built expressly that he might take his bride to the most beautiful lands in the world, and complete their honeymoon by sailing up the Mediterranean, and through the clustering islands of the Archipelago.

However, Lord Glenarvan had gone now to London. The lives of the shipwrecked men were at stake, and Lady Helena was too much concerned herself about them to grudge her husband's temporary absence. A telegram next day gave hope of his speedy return, but in the evening a letter apprised her of the difficulties his proposition had met with, and the morning after brought another, in which he openly expressed his dissatisfaction with the Admiralty.

Lady Helena began to get anxious as the day wore on. In the evening, when she was sitting alone in her room, Mr. Halbert, the house-steward, came in and asked if she would see a young girl and boy that wanted to speak to Lord Glenarvan.

"Some of the country people?" asked Lady Helena.

"No, madam," replied the steward, "I do not know them at all. They came by rail to Balloch, and walked the rest of the way to Luss."

"Tell them to come up, Halbert."

In a few minutes a girl and boy were shown in. They were evidently brother and sister, for the resemblance was unmistakable. The girl was about sixteen years of age; her tired pretty face, and sorrowful eyes, and resigned but courageous look, as well as her neat though poor attire, made a favourable impression. The boy she held by the hand was about twelve, but his face expressed such determination, that he appeared quite his sister's protector.

The girl seemed too shy to utter a word at first, but Lady Helena quickly relieved her embarrassment by saying, with an encouraging smile—

"You wish to speak to me, I think?"

"No," replied the boy, in a decided tone; "not to you, but to Lord Glenarvan."

"Excuse him, ma'am," said the girl, with a look at her brother.

"Lord Glenarvan is not at the Castle just now," returned Lady Helena; "but I am his wife, and if I can do anything for you——"

"You are Lady Glenarvan?" interrupted the girl.

"I am."

"The wife of Lord Glenarvan, of Malcolm Castle, that put an announcement in the 'Times' about the shipwreck of the *Britannia?*"

"Yes, yes," said Lady Helena, eagerly; "and you?"

"I am Miss Grant, ma'am, and this is my brother."

"Miss Grant, Miss Grant!" exclaimed Lady

Helen, drawing the young girl towards her, and taking both her hands and kissing the boy's rosy cheeks.

"What is it you know, ma'am, about the shipwreck? Tell me, is my father living? Shall we ever see him again? Oh, tell me," said the girl, earnestly.

"My dear child," replied Lady Helena, "Heaven forbid that I should answer you lightly such a question; I would not delude you with vain hopes."

"Oh, tell me all, tell me all, ma'am. I'm proof against sorrow. I can bear to hear anything."

"My poor child, there is but a faint hope, but with the help of Heaven, who is almighty, it is just possible you may some day see your father once more."

The girl burst into tears, and Robert seized Lady Glenarvan's hand and covered it with kisses.

As soon as they grew calmer, they asked a complete string of questions, and Lady Helena recounted the whole story of the document, telling them that their father had been wrecked on the coast of Patagonia, and that he and two sailors, the sole survivors, appeared to have reached the shore, and had written an appeal for help in three languages, and committed it to the care of the waves.

During the recital, Robert Grant was devouring the speaker with his eyes, and hanging on her lips. His childish imagination evidently retraced all the scenes of his father's shipwreck. He saw him on the deck of the *Britannia,* and then struggling with the billows, and then clinging to the rocks, and lying at length exhausted on the beach, though out of the reach of the tide.

More than once he cried out, "Oh, papa! my poor papa," and pressed close to his sister.

Miss Grant sat silent and motionless, with clasped hands, and all she said when the narration ended was—

"Oh, ma'am, the paper, please!"

"I have not it now, my dear child," replied Lady Helena.

"You haven't it?"

"No. Lord Glenarvan was obliged to take it to London, for the sake of your father; but I have told you all it contained, word for word, and how we managed to make out the complete sense from the fragments of words left—all except the longitude, unfortunately."

"We can do without that," said the boy.

"Yes, Mr. Robert," rejoined Lady Helena, smiling at the child's decided tone. "And so you see, Miss Grant, you know the smallest details now as well as I do."

"Yes, ma'am, but I should like to have seen my father's writing."

"Well, to-morrow, perhaps, to-morrow, Lord Glenarvan will be back. My husband determined to lay the document before the Lords of the Admiralty, to induce them to send out a ship immediately in search of Captain Grant."

"Is it possible, ma'am!" exclaimed the girl, "that you have done that for us?"

"Yes, my dear Miss Grant, and I am expecting Lord Glenarvan back every minute now."

"Oh, ma'am! Heaven bless you and Lord Glenarvan," said the young girl, fervently, overcome with grateful emotion.

"My dear girl, we deserve no thanks; any one in our place would have done the same. I only trust the hopes we are leading you to entertain may be realized, but till my husband returns, you will remain at the Castle."

"Oh, no, ma'am. I could not abuse the sympathy you show to strangers."

"Strangers, dear child!" interrupted Lady Helena; "you and your brother are not strangers in this house, and I should like Lord Glenarvan to be able on his arrival to tell the children of Captain Grant himself what is going to be done to rescue their father."

It was impossible to refuse an invitation given with such heart, and Miss Grant and her brother consented to stay till Lord Glenarvan returned.

CHAPTER IV.

LADY GLENARVAN'S PROPOSITION.

LADY HELENA thought it best to say nothing to the children about the fears Lord Glenarvan had expressed in his letters respecting the decision of the Lords of the Admiralty with regard to the document. Nor did she mention the probable captivity of Captain Grant among the Indians of South America. Why sadden the poor children, and damp their newly-cherished hopes? It would not in the least alter the actual state of the case; so not a word was said, and after answering all Miss Grant's questions, Lady Helena began to interrogate in her turn, asking her about her past life and her present circumstances.

It was a touching, simple story she heard in reply, and one which increased her sympathy for the young girl.

Mary and Robert were the Captain's only children. Harry Grant lost his wife when Robert was born, and during his long voyages he left his little ones in charge of his cousin, a good old lady. Captain Grant was a fearless sailor He not only thoroughly understood

navigation, but commerce also—a two-fold qualification, eminently useful to skippers in the merchant service. He lived in Dundee, in Perthshire, Scotland. His father, a minister of St. Katrine's Church, had given him a thorough education, as he believed that could never hurt anybody.

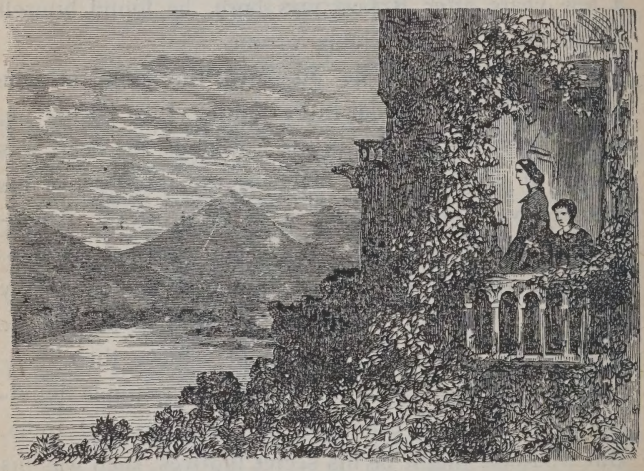
Harry's voyages were prosperous from the first, and a few years after Robert was born, he found himself possessed of a considerable fortune.

It was then that he projected the grand scheme which made him popular in Scotland. Like Glenarvan, and a few noble families in the Lowlands, his heart was not with England. In his eyes the interests of his country were not identified with those of the Anglo-Saxons, and to give them scope for personal development, he resolved to found an immense Scotch colony on one of the ocean continents. Possibly he might have thought that some day they would achieve their independence, as the United States did—an example doubtless to be followed eventually by Australia and India. But whatever might be his secret motives, such was his dream of colonization. But, as is easily understood, the Government opposed his plans, and put difficulties enough in his way to have killed an ordinary man. But Harry would not be beaten. He appealed to the patriotism of his countrymen, placed his fortune at the service of the cause, built a ship, and manned it with a picked crew, and leaving his children to the care of his old cousin, set off to explore the great islands of the Pacific. This was in 1861, and for twelve months, or

up to May, 1862, letters were regularly received from him; but no tidings whatever had come since his departure from Callao, in June, and the name of the *Britannia* never appeared in the Shipping List.

Just at this juncture the old cousin died, and Harry Grant's two children were left alone in the world.

Mary Grant was then only fourteen, but she



resolved to face her situation bravely, and to devote herself entirely to her little brother, who was still a mere child. By dint of close economy, combined with tact and prudence, she managed to support and educate him, working day and night, denying herself everything that she might give him all he needed, watching over him and caring for him like a mother.

The two children were living in this touching manner in Dundee, struggling patiently and courageously

with their poverty. Mary thought only of her brother, and indulged in dreams of a prosperous future for him. She had long given up all hope of the *Britannia,* and was fully persuaded that her father was dead. What, then, was her emotion when she accidentally saw the notice in the "Times"!

She never hesitated for an instant as to the course she should adopt; but determined to go to Dumbartonshire immediately, to learn the best and worst. Even if she were to be told that her father's lifeless body had been found on a distant shore, or in the bottom of some abandoned ship, it would be a relief from incessant doubt and torturing suspense.

She told her brother about the advertisement, and the two children started off together that same day for Perth, where they took the train, and arrived in the evening at Malcolm Castle.

Such was Mary Grant's sorrowful story, and she recounted it in so simple and unaffected a manner, that it was evident she never thought her conduct had been that of a heroine through those long trying years. But Lady Helena thought it for her, and more than once she put her arms round both the children, and could not restrain her tears.

As for Robert, he seemed to have heard these particulars for the first time. All the while his sister was speaking he gazed at her with wide open eyes, only knowing now how much she had done and suffered for him; and, as she ended, he flung himself on her neck, and exclaimed, "Oh, mamma! My dear little mamma!"

It was quite dark by this time, and Lady Helena made the children go to bed, for she knew they must be tired after their journey. They were soon both sound asleep, dreaming of happy days.

After they had retired, Lady Helena sent for Major McNabbs, and told him the incidents of the evening.

"That Mary Grant must be a brave girl," said the Major.

"I only hope my husband will succeed, for the poor children's sake," said his cousin. "It would be terrible for them if he did not."

"He will be sure to succeed, or the Lords of the Admiralty must have hearts harder than Portland stone."

But, notwithstanding McNabbs' assurance, Lady Helena passed the night in great anxiety, and could not close her eyes.

Mary Grant and her brother were up very early next morning, and were walking about in the courtyard when they heard the sound of a carriage approaching. It was Lord Glenarvan; and, almost immediately, Lady Helena and the Major came out to meet him.

Lady Helena flew towards her husband the moment he alighted; but he embraced her silently, and looked gloomy and disappointed—indeed, even furious.

"Well, Edward?" she said; "tell me."

"Well, Helena, dear; those people have no heart!"

"They have refused?"

"Yes. They have refused me a ship! They talked of the millions that had been wasted in searching for Franklin, and declared the document was obscure and

unintelligible! And, then, they said it was two years now since they were cast away, and there was little chance of finding them. Besides, they would have it that the Indians, who made them prisoners, would have dragged them into the interior, and it was impossible, they said, to hunt all through Patagonia for three men —three Scotchmen; that the search would be vain and perilous, and cost more lives than it saved. In short, they assigned all the reasons that people invent who have made up their minds to refuse. The truth is, they remembered Captain Grant's projects, and that is the secret of the whole affair. So the poor fellow is lost for ever."

"My father! my poor father!" cried Mary Grant, throwing herself on her knees before Lord Glenarvan, who exclaimed in amazement—

"Your father? What? Is this Miss——"

"Yes, Edward," said Lady Helena; "this is Miss Mary Grant and her brother, the two children condemned to orphanage by the cruel Admiralty!"

"Oh! Miss Grant," said Lord Glenarvan, raising the young girl, "if I had known of your presence——"

He said no more, and there was a painful silence in the courtyard, broken only by sobs. No one spoke, but the very attitude of both servants and masters spoke their indignation at the conduct of the English Government.

At last the Major said, addressing Lord Glenarvan, "Then you have no hope whatever?"

"None," was the reply.

"Very well, then," exclaimed little Robert. "I'll go and speak to those people myself, and we'll see if they——"

He did not complete his sentence, for his sister stopped him; but his clenched fist showed his intentions were the reverse of pacific.

"No, Robert," said Mary Grant, "we will thank this noble lord and lady for what they have done for us, and never cease to think of them with gratitude; and then we'll both go together."

"Mary!" said Lady Helena, in a tone of surprise.

"Go where?" asked Lord Glenarvan.

"I am going to throw myself at the Queen's feet, and we shall see if she will turn a deaf ear to the prayers of two children, who implore their father's life."

Lord Glenarvan shook his head; not that he doubted the kind heart of her Majesty, but he knew Mary would never gain access to her. Suppliants but too rarely reach the steps of a throne; it seems as if royal palaces had the same inscription on their doors that the English have on their ships—

Passengers are requested not to speak to the man at the wheel.

Lady Glenarvan understood what was passing in her husband's mind, and she felt the young girl's attempt would be useless, and only plunge the poor children in deeper despair. Suddenly, a grand, generous purpose fired her soul, and she called out—

"Mary Grant! wait, my child, and listen to what I'm going to say."

Mary had just taken her brother by the hand, and turned to go away; but she stepped back at Lady Helena's bidding.

The young wife went up to her husband, and said, with tears in her eyes, though her voice was firm, and her face beamed with animation—

"Edward, when Captain Grant wrote that letter, and threw it into the sea, he committed it to the care of God. God has sent it to us—to us! Undoubtedly God intends us to undertake the rescue of these poor men."

"What do you mean, Helena?"

"I mean this, that we ought to think ourselves fortunate if we can begin our married life with a good action. Well, you know, Edward, that to please me you planned a pleasure trip; but what could give us such genuine pleasure, or be so useful, as to save those unfortunate fellows, cast off by their country?"

"Helena!" exclaimed Lord Glenarvan.

"Yes, Edward, you understand me. The *Duncan* is a good strong ship; she can venture in the Southern Seas, or go round the world if necessary. Let us go, Edward; let us start off, and search for Captain Grant!"

Lord Glenarvan made no reply to this bold proposition, but smiled, and, holding out his arms, drew his wife into a close, fond embrace. Mary and Robert seized her hands, and covered them with kisses; and the servants who thronged the courtyard, and had been witnesses of this touching scene, shouted with one voice, "Hurrah for the Lady of Luss. Three cheers for Lord and Lady Glenarvan!"

CHAPTER V.

THE DEPARTURE OF THE "DUNCAN."

We have said already that Lady Helena was a brave, generous woman, and what she had just done proved it indisputably. Her husband had good reason to be proud of such a wife, one who could understand and enter into all his views. The idea of going to Captain Grant's rescue had occurred to him in London when his request was refused, and he would have anticipated Lady Helena, only he could not bear the thought of parting from her. But now that she herself proposed to go, all hesitation was at an end. The servants of the Castle had hailed the project with loud acclamations—for it was to save their brothers—Scotchmen, like themselves—and Lord Glenarvan cordially joined his cheers with theirs, for the Lady of Luss.

The departure once resolved upon, there was not an hour to be lost. A telegram was despatched to John Mangles the very same day, conveying Lord Glenarvan's orders to take the *Duncan* immediately to Glasgow, and to make preparations for a voyage to the Southern Seas, and possibly round the world, for Lady Helena was

right in her opinion that the yacht might safely attempt the circumnavigation of the globe, if necessary.

The *Duncan* was a steam yacht of the finest description. She was 210 tons burden—much larger than any of the first vessels that touched the shores of the New World, for the largest of the four ships that sailed with Columbus was only 70 tons. She had two masts and all the sails and rigging of an ordinary clipper, which would enable her to take advantage of every favourable wind, though her chief reliance was on her mechanical power. The engine, which was constructed on a new system, was a high-pressure one, of 160-horse power, and put in motion a double screw. This gave the yacht such swiftness that during her trial trip in the Frith of Clyde, she made, reckoning by the patent log —an instrument which, by means of needles turning round a graduated centre, indicates the rate of speed—seventeen miles an hour, a higher speed than any vessel had yet attained. No alterations were consequently needed in the *Duncan* herself; John Mangles had only to attend to her interior arrangements.

His first care was to enlarge the bunkers, to carry as much coal as possible, for it is difficult to get fresh supplies *en route*. He had to do the same with the store-rooms, and managed so well that he succeeded in laying in provisions enough for two years. There was abundance of money at his command, and enough remained to buy a cannon, on a pivot carriage, which he mounted on the forecastle. There was no knowing

what might happen, and it is always well to be able to send a good round bullet flying four miles off.

John Mangles understood his business. Though he was only the captain of a pleasure yacht, he was one of the best skippers in Glasgow. He was thirty years of age, and his countenance expressed both courage and goodness, if the features were somewhat coarse. He had been brought up at the Castle by the Glenarvan family, and had turned out a capital sailor, having already given proof, in some of his long voyages, of his skill and energy and *sang froid.* When Lord Glenarvan offered him the command of the *Duncan,* he accepted it with right good will, for he loved the master of Malcolm Castle like a brother, and had hitherto vainly sought some opportunity of showing his devotion.

Tom Austin, the mate, was an old sailor, worthy of all confidence. The crew, consisting of twenty-five men, including the captain and chief officer, were all from Dumbartonshire, experienced sailors, and all belonging to the Glenarvan estate; in fact, it was a regular clan, and they did not forget to carry with them the traditional bagpipes. Lord Glenarvan had in them a band of trusty fellows, skilled in their calling, devoted to himself, full of courage, and as practised in handling fire-arms as in the manœuvring of a ship; a valiant little troop, ready to follow him anywhere, even in the most dangerous expeditions. When the crew heard whither they were bound, they could not restrain their enthusiasm, and the rocks of Dumbarton rang again with their joyous outbursts of cheers.

But while John Mangles made the stowage and provisioning of the yacht his chief business, he did not forget to fit up the rooms of Lord and Lady Glenarvan for a long voyage. He had also to get cabins ready for the children of Captain Grant, as Lady Helena could not refuse Mary's request to accompany her.

As for young Robert, he would have smuggled himself in somewhere in the hold of the *Duncan* rather than be left behind. He would willingly have gone as a cabin-boy, like Nelson. It was impossible to resist a little fellow like that, and, indeed, no one tried. He would not even go as a passenger, but must serve in some capacity, as cabin-boy, apprentice, or sailor, he did not care which, so he was put in charge of John Mangles, to be properly trained for his vocation.

"And I hope he won't spare me the 'cat-o'-nine-tails' if I don't do properly," said Robert.

"Rest easy on that score, my boy," said Lord Glenarvan, gravely; he did not add, that this mode of punishment was forbidden on board the *Duncan*, and moreover, was quite unnecessary.

To complete the roll of passengers, we must name Major McNabbs. The Major was about fifty years of age, with a calm face and regular features—a man who did whatever he was told, of an excellent, indeed a perfect temper; modest, silent, peaceable, and amiable, agreeing with everybody on every subject, never discussing, never disputing, never getting angry. He wouldn't move a step quicker, or slower, whether he walked up-stairs to bed or mounted a breach. Nothing

could excite him, nothing could disturb him, not even a cannon ball, and no doubt he will die without ever having known even a passing feeling of irritation. This man was endowed in an eminent degree, not only with ordinary animal courage, that physical bravery of the battle-field, which is solely due to muscular energy, but he had what is far nobler—moral courage, firmness of soul. If he had any fault it was his being so intensely Scotch from top to toe, a Caledonian of the Caledonians, an obstinate stickler for all the ancient customs of his country. This was the reason he would never serve in England, and he gained his rank of major in the 42nd regiment, the Highland Black Watch, composed entirely of Scottish noblemen. As a cousin of Glenarvan, he lived in Malcolm Castle, and as a major he went as a matter of course with the *Duncan.*

Such, then, was the *personnel* of this yacht, so unexpectedly called to make one of the most wonderful voyages of modern times. From the hour she reached the steam-boat quay at Glasgow, she completely monopolized the public attention. A considerable crowd visited her every day, and the *Duncan* was the one topic of interest and conversation, to the great vexation of the different captains in the port, amongst others of Captain Burton, in command of the *Scotia,* a magnificent steamer lying close beside her, and bound for Calcutta. Considering her size, the *Scotia* might justly look upon the *Duncan* as a mere fly-boat, and yet this pleasure yacht of Lord Glenarvan's was quite

the centre of attraction, and the excitement about her daily increased.

The time of departure was near at hand. A month after the trial trip, she lay ready for sea, and the sailing day was fixed for the 25th of August, so that the travellers might arrive in southern latitudes about the commencement of spring.

Lord Glenarvan's project was no sooner made public than remonstrances began to come from various quarters, reminding him of the fatigues and dangers of the voyage, but he paid no attention to them, and continued his preparations for leaving Malcolm Castle. Many blamed him besides who sincerely admired him; but the general opinion was in his favour, and all the newspapers, except the organs of the government, unanimously condemned the Lords of the Admiralty in the affair. But blame or praise mattered not to Lord Glenarvan; he did his duty, and that was all he cared about.

On the 24th of August, the little party, comprising Lord and Lady Glenarvan, Major McNabbs, Robert and Mary Grant, Mr. Olbinett, the steward of the yacht, and his wife, in the capacity of waiting-woman to Lady Helena, quitted the Castle, amidst the affectionate farewells of the servants and retainers. They stepped on board the *Duncan* a few hours later, Lady Helena receiving quite an ovation of sympathetic admiration from the people of Glasgow.

The apartments of Lord Glenarvan and his wife were on the poop. They consisted of two bed-rooms

and dressing-rooms and a drawing-room. Then there was a saloon for common use, with six cabins round, five of which were occupied by Mary and Robert Grant, Mr. and Mrs. Olbinett, and Major McNabbs. The captain and chief officer had cabins opening on deck, and the men had their quarters below, where there was ample accommodation, for the yacht carried no cargo beyond coal, provisions, and arms.

The *Duncan* was to sail out with the tide at three o'clock on the morning of the 25th of August. But before starting, a touching ceremony was witnessed by the good people of Glasgow. At eight o'clock the night before, Lord Glenarvan and his friends, and the entire crew, from the stokers to the captain, all who were to take part in this self-sacrificing voyage, left the yacht and repaired to St. Mungo's, the ancient cathedral of the city. This venerable edifice, so marvellously described by Walter Scott, remains intact amid the ruins made by the Reformation; and it was there, beneath its lofty arches, in the grand nave, in the presence of an immense crowd, and surrounded by tombs, as thickly set as in a cemetery, that they all assembled to implore the blessing of Heaven on their expedition, and to put themselves under the protection of Providence. The Rev. Mr. Morton conducted the service, and when he had ended and pronounced the benediction, a young girl's voice broke the solemn silence that followed. It was Mary Grant, who poured out her heart to God in prayer for her benefactors, while grateful happy tears streamed down her cheeks,

and almost choked her utterance. The vast assembly dispersed under the influence of deep emotion, and at ten o'clock the passengers and crew returned on board the vessel.

Preparations for departure commenced at once. At midnight the fires were lighted, and soon clouds of black smoke rose above the night mists. The sails had been carefully encased in a thick covering to preserve them from being soiled, as the wind was blowing from the S.W., and it would have been useless to unfurl them.

At two a.m. the *Duncan* began to tremble with the action of the boilers, the white steam escaped from the safety valves, the tide was high, and just upon the turn; the day had already dawned, and the beacon lights were dying out before its increasing brightness. There was nothing to do now but to start.

John Mangles sent to tell Lord Glenarvan, who joined him on the deck immediately.

The ebb tide began to be sensibly felt, and the *Duncan*, loosed from her moorings, gave several tremendous hisses, and cleared out from the neighbouring vessels: the screw was then set in motion, and its impetus pushed the yacht right out into the river. John took no pilot on board; he knew all the intricacies of the Clyde perfectly, and no one could have better manœuvred the vessel. With his right hand he managed the engines by signs, and with his left the helm. Soon the last factories on the banks were passed, and the villas rising here and there on the hills along the shore,

came in sight, the noise of the city each moment growing fainter in the distance.

An hour afterwards the *Duncan* skirted the rocks of Dumbarton. Two hours later, and she was steaming along the Frith of Clyde. At six in the morning she doubled the Mull of Cantyre, and sailed out of the North Channel into the wide ocean.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PASSENGER IN CABIN NUMBER SIX.

THE ladies passed the whole of the first day in their berths, for there was a heavy swell in the sea, and towards evening the wind blew pretty fresh, and the *Duncan* tossed and pitched considerably.

But the morning after the wind changed, and the captain ordered the men to put up the foresail, and brigantine, and foretopsail, which greatly lessened the rolling of the vessel. Lady Helena and Mary Grant were able to come on deck at daybreak, where they found Lord Glenarvan, Major McNabbs and the captain. The sunrise was magnificent. The orb of day seemed rising out of a sea of molten gold, and as the *Duncan* glided through the flood of splendour which irradiated the waves, her white sails looked as if stretching themselves out towards the bright sunbeams.

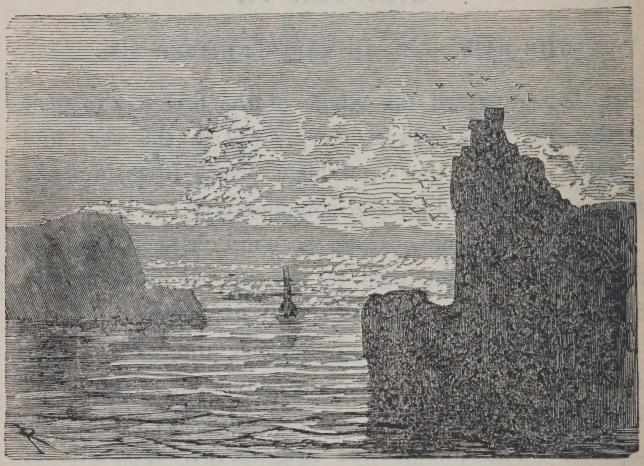
The spectators gazed for a while in silence, till at last Lady Helena exclaimed—

"What a glorious spectacle! We shall have a beautiful day. I only hope the wind will keep favourable now."

"We could not wish a better, dear Helena," said Lord Glenarvan. "We have made a good beginning to our voyage at any rate, and cannot complain."

"Will it be a long voyage, Edward?"

"You must ask the captain that question. Are we getting on well, John? Does the ship please you?"



"Very much, your Lordship," replied John. "She is a wonderful ship, and a sailor loves to feel her planks under his feet; and the engine works so admirably with her. See what a smooth track the yacht makes, and how easily she cuts through the waves. We are going at the rate of seventeen miles an hour, and if we keep up that speed we shall cross the line in ten days, and in less than five weeks we shall have doubled Cape Horn."

"Do you hear that, Mary?" asked Lady Helena. 'In less than five weeks."

"Yes, ma'am, I heard it, and it makes my heart leap to think of it," replied the girl.

"And how do you stand the sea, Miss Mary?" said Lord Glenarvan.

"Pretty well, my Lord. I am not very much inconvenienced by it. Besides, I shall get used to it."

"And our young Robert?"

"Oh, as for Robert," said the captain, "whenever he is not poking about down below in the engine-room, he is perched somewhere aloft among the rigging. A youngster like that laughs at sea-sickness. Why, look at him this very moment! Do you see him?"

The captain pointed towards the foremast, and sure enough there was Robert, hanging on the yards of the topgallant-mast, a hundred feet above in the air. Mary involuntarily gave a start, but the captain said—

"Oh, don't be afraid, Miss Mary; he is all right, take my word for it; I'll have a capital sailor to present to Captain Grant before long, for we'll find the worthy captain, depend upon it."

"Heaven grant it, Mr. John," replied the young girl.

"My dear child," said Lord Glenarvan, "there is something so providential in the whole affair, that we have every reason to hope. We are not going, we are led; we are not searching, we are guided. And then see all the brave men that have enlisted in the service of the good cause. We shall not only succeed in our

enterprise, but there will be little difficulty in it. I promised Lady Helena a pleasure trip, and I am much mistaken if I don't keep my word."

"Edward," said his wife, "you are the best of men."

"Not at all," was the reply; "but I have the best of crews and the best of ships. You don't admire the *Duncan*, I suppose, Miss Mary?"

"On the contrary, my Lord, I do admire her, and I'm a connoisseur in ships," returned the young girl.

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I have played all my life on my father's ship. He should have made me a sailor, for I daresay, at a push, I could reef a sail or plait a gasket easily enough."

"Do you say so, miss?" exclaimed John Mangles.

"If you talk like, that you and John will be great friends, for he can't think any calling is equal to that of a seaman; he can't fancy any other, even for a woman. Isn't it true, John?"

"Quite so," said the captain, "and yet, your Lordship, I must confess that Miss Grant is more in her place on the poop than reefing a topsail. But for all that, I am quite flattered by her remarks."

"And especially when she admires the *Duncan*," replied Glenarvan.

"Well, really," said Lady Glenarvan, "you are so proud of your yacht that you make me wish to look all over it; and I should like to go down and see how our brave men are lodged."

"Their quarters are first-rate," replied John, "they are as comfortable as if they were at home."

"And they really are at home, my dear Helena," said Lord Glenarvan. "This yacht is a portion of our old Caledonia, a fragment of Dumbartonshire, making a voyage by special favour, so that in a manner we are still in our own country. The *Duncan* is Malcolm Castle, and the ocean is Loch Lomond."

"Very well, dear Edward, do the honours of the Castle then."

"At your service, madam; but let me tell Olbinett first."

The steward of the yacht was an excellent *maître d'hotel*, and might have been French for his airs of importance, but for all that he discharged his functions with zeal and intelligence.

"Olbinett," said his master, as he appeared in answer to his summons, "we are going to have a turn before breakfast. I hope we shall find it ready when we come back."

He said this just as if it had been a walk to Tarbert or Loch Katrine they were going, and the steward bowed with perfect gravity in reply.

"Are you coming with us, Major?" asked Lady Helena.

"If you command me," replied McNabbs.

"Oh!" said Lord Glenarvan, "the Major is absorbed in his cigar; you mustn't tear him from it. He is an inveterate smoker, Miss Mary, I can tell you. He is always smoking, even while he sleeps."

The Major gave an assenting nod, and Lord Glenarvan and his party went below.

McNabbs remained alone, talking to himself, as was his habit, and was soon enveloped in still thicker clouds of smoke. He stood motionless, watching the track of the yacht. After some minutes of this silent contemplation he turned round, and suddenly found himself face to face with a new comer. Certainly, if anything could have surprised him, this *rencontre* would, for he had never seen the stranger in his life before.

He was a tall, thin, withered-looking man, about forty years of age, and resembled a long nail with a big head. His head was large and massive, his forehead high, his chin very marked. His eyes were concealed by enormous round spectacles, and in his look there was that peculiar indecision which is common to nyctalopes, or people who have a peculiar construction of the eye, which makes the sight imperfect in the day and better at night. It was evident from his physiognomy that he was a lively, intelligent man; he had not the crabbed expression of those grave individuals who never laugh on principle, and cover their emptiness with a mask of seriousness. He looked far from that. His careless, good-humoured air, and easy, unceremonious manners, showed plainly that he knew to take men and things on their bright side. But though he had not yet opened his mouth, he gave one the impression of being a great talker, and, moreover, one of those absent folks who neither see though they are looking, nor hear though they are listening. He wore a travelling cap, and

strong, low, yellow boots with leather gaiters. His pantaloons and jacket were of brown velvet, and their innumerable pockets were stuffed with note-books, memorandum-books, account-books, pocket-books, and a thousand other things equally cumbersome and use-

less, not to mention a telescope in addition, which he carried in a shoulder-belt.

The stranger's excitement was a strong contrast to the Major's placidity. He walked round McNabbs, looking at him and questioning him with his eyes,

without eliciting one remark from the imperturbable Scotchman, or awakening his curiosity in the least, to know where he came from, and where he was going, and how he had got on board the *Duncan.*

Finding all his efforts baffled by the Major's indifference, the mysterious passenger seized his telescope, drew it out to its fullest extent, about four feet, and began gazing at the horizon, standing motionless with his legs wide apart. His examination lasted some few minutes, and then he lowered the glass, set it up on deck, and leaned on it as if it had been a walking-stick. Of course, his weight shut up the instrument immediately, by pushing the different parts one into the other, and so suddenly, that he fell full length on deck, and lay sprawling at the foot of the mainmast.

Anyone else but the Major would have smiled, at least, at such a ludicrous sight; but McNabbs never moved a muscle of his face.

This was too much for the stranger, and he called out, with an unmistakingly foreign accent,

"Steward!"

He waited a minute, but nobody appeared, and he called again, still louder, "Steward!"

Mr. Olbinett chanced to be passing that minute on his way from the galley, and what was his astonishment at hearing himself addressed like this by a lanky individual of whom he had no knowledge whatever.

"Where can he have come from? Who is he?" he thought to himself. "He cannot possibly be one of Lord Glenarvan's friends?"

However, he went up on the poop, and approached the unknown personage, who accosted him with the inquiry, "Are you the steward of this vessel?"

"Yes, sir," replied Olbinett; "but I have not the honour of ——"

"I am the passenger in cabin Number 6."

"Number 6!" repeated the steward.

"Certainly; and your name, what is it?"

"Olbinett."

"Well, Olbinett, my friend, we must think of breakfast, and that pretty quickly. It is thirty-six hours since I have had anything to eat, or rather thirty-six hours that I have been asleep—pardonable enough in a man who came all the way, without stopping, from Paris to Glasgow. What is the breakfast hour?"

"Nine o'clock," replied Olbinett, mechanically.

The stranger tried to pull out his watch to see the time; but it was not till he had rummaged through the ninth pocket that he found it.

"Ah, well," he said, "it is only eight o'clock at present. Fetch me a glass of sherry and a biscuit while I am waiting, for I am actually falling through sheer inanition."

Olbinett heard him without understanding what he meant, for the voluble stranger kept on talking incessantly, flying from one subject to another.

"The captain? Isn't the captain up yet? And the chief officer? What is he doing? Is he asleep still? It is fine weather, fortunately, and the wind is favourable, and the ship goes all alone."

Just at that moment John Mangles appeared at the top of the stairs.

"Here is the captain!" said Olbinett.

"Ah! Delighted, Captain Burton, delighted to make your acquaintance," exclaimed the unknown.

John Mangles stood stupified, as much at seeing the stranger on board as at hearing himself called "Captain Burton."

But the new comer went on in the most affable manner.

"Allow me to shake hands with you, sir; and if I did not do so yesterday evening, it was only because I did not wish to be troublesome when you were starting. But to-day, captain, it gives me great pleasure to begin my intercourse with you."

John Mangles opened his eyes as wide as possible, and stood staring at Olbinett and the stranger alternately.

But without waiting for a reply, the rattling fellow continued,

"Now the introduction is made, my dear captain, we are old friends. Let's have a little talk, and tell me how you like the *Scotia?*"

"What do you mean by the *Scotia?*" put in John Mangles at last.

"By the *Scotia?* Why, the ship we're on, of course—a good ship that has been commended to me, not only for its physical qualities, but also for the moral qualities of its commander, the brave Captain Burton. You will be some relation of the famous African traveller

of that name. A daring man he was, sir. I offer you my congratulations."

"Sir," interrupted John, "I am not only no relation of Burton the great traveller, but I am not even Captain Burton."

"Ah, is that so? It is Mr. Burdness, the chief officer, that I am talking to at present."

"Mr. Burdness!" repeated John Mangles, beginning to suspect how the matter stood. Only he asked himself whether the man was mad, or some heedless rattle-pate? He was beginning to explain the case in a categorical manner, when Lord Glenarvan and his party came up on the poop. The stranger caught sight of them directly, and exclaimed,

"Ah! the passengers, the passengers! I hope you are going to introduce me to Mr. Burdness!"

But he could not wait for anyone's intervention, and going up to them with perfect ease and grace, said, bowing to Miss Grant, "Madame;" then to Lady Helena, with another bow, "Miss;" and to Lord Glenarvan, "Sir."

Here John Mangles interrupted him, and said, "Lord Glenarvan."

"My Lord," continued the unknown, "I beg pardon for presenting myself to you, but at sea it is well to relax the strict rules of etiquette a little. I hope we shall soon become acquainted with each other, and that the company of these ladies will make our voyage in the *Scotia* appear as short as agreeable."

Lady Helena and Miss Grant were too astonished

to be able to utter a single word. The presence of this intruder on the poop of the *Duncan* was perfectly inexplicable.

Lord Glenarvan was more collected, and said, "Sir, to whom have I the honour of speaking?"

"To Jacques, Eliacin, François, Marie Paganel, Secretary of the Geographical Society of Paris, Corresponding Member of the Societies of Berlin, Bombay, Darmstadt, Leipsic, London, St. Petersburg, Vienna, and New York; Honorary Member of the Royal Geographical and Ethnographical Institute of the East Indies; who, after having spent twenty years of his life in geographical work in the study, wishes to see active service, and is on his way to India to gain for the science what information he can by following up the footsteps of great travellers."

CHAPTER VII.

WHERE JACQUES PAGANEL CAME FROM, AND WHERE HE WAS GOING.

THE Secretary of the Geographical Society was evidently an amiable personage, for all this was said in the most charming manner. Lord Glenarvan knew quite well who he was now, for he had often heard Paganel spoken of, and was aware of his merits. His geographical works, his papers on modern discoveries, inserted in the reports of the Society, and his world-wide correspondence, gave him a most distinguished place among the *literati* of France.

Lord Glenarvan could not but welcome such a guest, and shook hands cordially.

"And now that our introductions are over," he added, "will you allow me, Monsieur Paganel, to ask you a question?"

"Twenty, my Lord," replied Paganel; "it will always be a pleasure to converse with you."

"Was it last evening that you came on board this vessel?"

"Yes, my Lord, about eight o'clock. I jumped into

a cab at the Caledonian Railway, and from the cab into the *Scotia,* where I had booked my cabin before I left Paris. It was a dark night, and I saw no one on board, so I found cabin No. 6, and went to my berth immediately, for I had heard that the best way to prevent sea-sickness is to go to bed as soon as you start, and not to stir for the first few days; and, moreover, I had been travelling for thirty hours. So I tucked myself in, and slept conscientiously, I assure you, for thirty-six hours."

Paganel's listeners understood the whole mystery now, of his presence on the *Duncan.* The French traveller had mistaken his vessel, and gone on board while the crew were attending the service at St. Mungo's. All was explained. But what would the learned geographer say, when he heard the name and destination of the ship, in which he had taken passage?

"Then it is Calcutta, M. Paganel, that you have chosen as your point of departure on your travels?"

"Yes, my Lord, to see India has been a cherished purpose with me all my life. It will be the realization of my fondest dreams, to find myself in the country of elephants and Thugs."

"Then it would be by no means a matter of in difference to you, to visit another country instead."

"No, my Lord; indeed it would be very disagreeable, for I have letters to Lord Somerset, the Governor-General, and also a commission to execute for the Geographical Society."

"Ah, you have a commission?"

"Yes, I have to attempt a curious and important

journey, the plan of which has been drawn up by my learned friend and colleague, M. Vivien de Saint Martin. I am to pursue the track of the Schlaginweit Brothers; and Colonels Waugh and Webb, and Hodgson; and Huc and Gabet, the missionaries; and Moorcroft, and M. Jules Remy, and so many celebrated travellers. I mean to try and succeed where Krick the missionary so unfortunately failed in 1846; in a word, I want to follow the course of the river Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou, which waters Thibet for a distance of 1500 kilomètres, flowing along the northern base of the Himalayas, and to find out at last whether this river does not join itself to the Brahmapoutre in the north-east of Assam. The gold medal, my Lord, is promised to the traveller who will succeed in ascertaining a fact which is one of the greatest *desiderata* to the geography of India."

Paganel was magnificent. He spoke with superb animation, soaring away on the wings of imagination. It would have been as impossible to stop him as to stop the Rhine at the Falls of Schaffhausen.

"Monsieur Jacques Paganel," said Lord Glenarvan, after a brief pause, "that would certainly be a grand achievement, and you would confer a great boon on science, but I should not like to allow you to be labouring under a mistake any longer, and I must tell you, therefore, that for the present at least, you must give up the pleasure of a visit to India."

"Give it up! And why?"

"Because you are turning your back on the Indian peninsula."

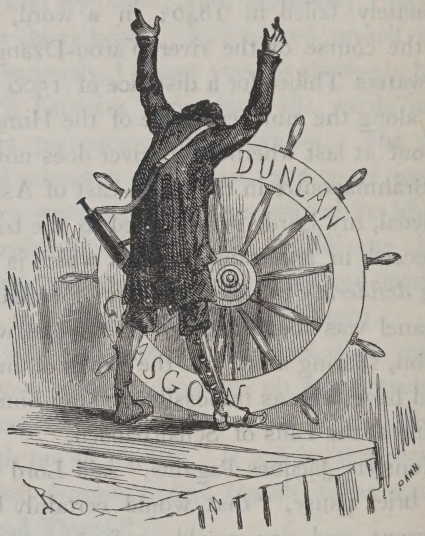
"What! Captain Burton."

"I am not Captain Burton," said John Mangles.

"But the *Scotia*."

"This vessel is not the *Scotia*."

It would be impossible to depict the astonishment of Paganel. He stared first at one and then at another



in the utmost bewilderment. Lord Glenarvan was perfectly grave, and Lady Helena and Mary showed their sympathy for his vexation by their looks. As for John Mangles, he could not suppress a smile; but the Major appeared as unconcerned as usual. At last the poor fellow shrugged his shoulders, pushed down his spectacles over his nose, and said—

"You are joking."

But just at that very moment his eye fell on the wheel of the ship, and he saw the two words on it—

Duncan.
Glasgow.

"The *Duncan!* the *Duncan!*" he exclaimed, with a cry of despair, and forthwith rushed down the stairs, and away to his cabin.

As soon as the unfortunate *savant* had disappeared, every one, except the Major, broke out into such peals of

laughter that the sound reached the ears of the sailors in the forecastle. To mistake a railway or take the train to Edinburgh when you want to go to Dumbarton might happen; but to mistake a ship and be sailing to Chili when you meant to go to India—that is a blunder indeed!

"However," said Lord Glenarvan, "I am not much astonished at it in Paganel. He is quite famous for such misadventures. One day he published a celebrated map of America, and put Japan in it! But for all that, he is distinguished for his learning, and he is one of the best geographers in France."

"But what shall we do with the poor gentleman?" said Lady Helena; "we can't take him with us to Patagonia."

"Why not?" replied McNabbs, gravely. "We are not responsible for his heedless mistakes. Suppose he were in a railway train, would they stop it for him?"

"No, but he would get out at the first station."

"Well, that is just what he can do here, too, if he likes; he can disembark at the first place where we touch."

While they were talking, Paganel came up again on the poop, looking very wobegone and crestfallen. He had been making inquiry about his luggage, to assure himself that it was all on board, and kept repeating incessantly the unlucky words, "The *Duncan!* the *Duncan!*"

He could find no others in his vocabulary. He paced restlessly up and down; sometimes stopping to examine the sails, or gaze inquiringly over the wide ocean, at the

far horizon. At length he accosted Lord Glenarvan once more, and said—

"And this *Duncan*—where is it going?"

"To America, Monsieur Paganel," was the reply.

"And to what particular part?"

"To Concepcion."

"To Chili! to Chili!" cried the unfortunate geographer. "And my mission to India. But what will M. de Quatrefages, the President of the Central Commission, say? And M. d'Avezac? And M. Cortambert? And M. Vivien de Saint Martin? How shall I show my face at the *séances* of the Society?"

"Come, Monsieur Paganel, don't despair! It can all be managed; you will only have to put up with a little delay, which is relatively of not much importance. The Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou will wait for you still in the mountains of Thibet. We shall soon put in at Madeira, and you will get a ship there to take you back to Europe."

"Thanks, my Lord. I suppose I must resign myself to it; but people will say it is a most extraordinary adventure, and it is only to me such things happen. And then, too, there is a cabin taken for me on board the *Scotia*."

"Oh, as to the *Scotia*, you'll have to give that up meantime."

"But the *Duncan* is a pleasure yacht, is it not?" began Paganel again, after a fresh examination of the vessel.

"Yes, sir," said John Mangles, "and belongs to Lord Glenarvan."

"Who begs you will draw freely on his hospitality," said Lord Glenarvan.

"A thousand thanks, my Lord! I deeply feel your courtesy, but allow me to make one observation. India is a fine country, and can offer many a surprising marvel to travellers. These ladies, I suppose, have never seen it. Well, now, the man at the helm has only to give a turn to the wheel, and the *Duncan* will sail as easily to Calcutta as to Concepcion; and since it is only a pleasure trip that you are——"

His proposal was met by such grave, disapproving shakes of the head, that he stopped short before the sentence was completed; and Lady Helena said—

"Monsieur Paganel, if we were only on a pleasure trip, I should reply, 'Let us all go to India together,' and I am sure Lord Glenarvan would not object; but the *Duncan* is going to bring back shipwrecked mariners who were cast away on the shores of Patagonia, and we could not alter such a destination."

The Frenchman was soon put in possession of all the circumstances of the case. He was no unmoved auditor, and when he heard of Lady Helena's generous proposition, he could not help saying—

"Madam, permit me to express my admiration of your conduct throughout—my unreserved admiration. Let your yacht continue her course. I should reproach myself were I to cause a single day's delay."

"Will you join us in our search, then?" asked Lady Helena.

"It is impossible, madam. I must fulfil my mission.

I shall disembark at the first place you touch at, wherever it may be."

"That will be Madeira," said John Mangles.

"Madeira be it, then. I shall only be 180 leagues from Lisbon, and I shall wait there for some means of transport."

"Very well, Monsieur Paganel, it shall be as you wish; and, for my own part, I am very glad to be able to offer you, meantime, a few days' hospitality. I only hope you will not find our company too dull."

"Oh, my Lord!" exclaimed Paganel, "I am but too happy to have made a mistake which has turned out so agreeably. Still, it is a very ridiculous plight for a man to be in, to find himself sailing to America when he set out to go to the East Indies!"

But, in spite of this melancholy reflection, the Frenchman submitted gracefully to the compulsory delay. He made himself amiable and merry, and even diverting, and enchanted the ladies with his good humour. Before the end of the day he was friends with everybody. At his request, the famous document was brought out. He studied it carefully and minutely for a long time, and finally declared his opinion that no other interpretation of it was possible. Mary Grant and her brother inspired him with the most lively interest. He gave them great hope; indeed, the young girl could not help smiling at his sanguine prediction of success, and at his odd way of foreseeing future events. But for his mission, he would have made one of the search-party for Captain Grant, undoubtedly.

As for Lady Helena, when he heard that she was a daughter of William Tuffnell, there was a perfect explosion of admiring epithets. He had known her father, and what letters had passed between them when William Tuffnell was a corresponding member of the Society! It was he himself that had introduced him with M. Malte-Brun. What a *rencontre* this was, and what a pleasure to travel with the daughter of Tuffnell!

He wound up by asking permission to kiss her, which Lady Helena granted, though it was, perhaps, a little improper.

CHAPTER VIII.

ONE BRAVE MAN MORE ON BOARD THE "DUNCAN."

MEANTIME the yacht, favoured by the currents from the north of Africa, was making rapid progress towards the equator. On the 30th of August they sighted the Madeira group of islands, and Glenarvan, true to his promise, offered to put in there, and land his new guest.

But Paganel said—

"My dear Lord, I won't stand on ceremony with you. Tell me, did you intend to stop at Madeira before I came on board?"

"No," replied Glenarvan.

"Well, then, allow me to profit by my unlucky mistake. Madeira is an island too well known to be of much interest now to a geographer. Everything about this group has been said and written already. Besides, it is completely going down as far as wine growing is concerned. Just imagine no vines to speak of being in Madeira! In 1813, 22,000 pipes of wine were made there, and in 1845 the number fell to 2669. It is a grievous spectacle! If it is all the same to you, we might go on to the Canary Isles instead."

"Certainly. It will not the least interfere with our route."

"I know it will not, my dear Lord. In the Canary Islands, you see, there are three groups to study, besides the Peak of Teneriffe, which I always wished to visit. This is an opportunity, and I should like to avail myself of it, and make the ascent of the famous mountain, while I am waiting for a ship to take me back to Europe."

"As you please, my dear Paganel," said Lord Glenarvan, though he could not help smiling; and no wonder, for these islands are scarcely 250 miles from Madeira, a trifling distance for such a quick sailer as the *Duncan.*

Next day, about 2 p.m., John Mangles and Paganel were walking on the poop. The Frenchman was assailing his companion with all sorts of questions about Chili, when all at once the captain interrupted him, and, pointing towards the southern horizon, said—

"Monsieur Paganel?"

"Yes, my dear captain."

"Be so good as to look in this direction. Don't you see anything?"

"Nothing."

"You're not looking in the right place. It is not on the horizon, but above it, in the clouds."

"In the clouds? I might well not see."

"There, there, by the upper end of the bow-sprit!"

"I see nothing."

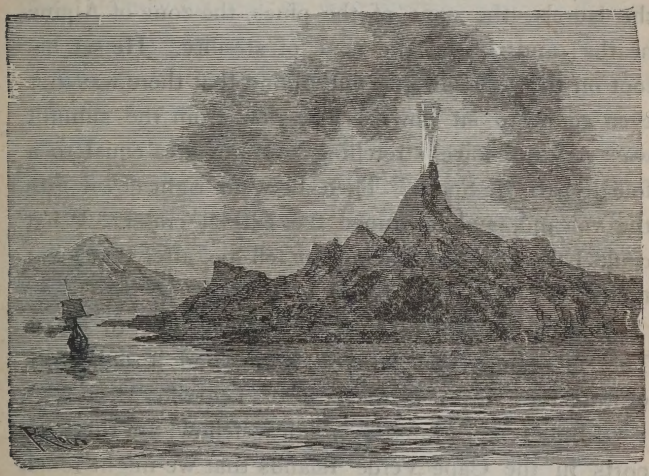
"Then you don't want to see. Anyway, though

we are forty miles off yet, I tell you the Peak of Teneriffe is quite visible yonder above the horizon."

But whether Paganel could not or would not see it then, two hours later he was forced to yield to ocular evidence, or own himself blind.

"You do see it at last, then," said John Mangles.

"Yes, yes, distinctly," replied Paganel, adding, in a



disdainful tone, "and that's what they call the Peak of Teneriffe!"

"That's the Peak!"

"It doesn't look much of a height."

"It is 11,000 feet though above the level of the sea."

"That is not equal to Mont Blanc."

"Likely enough, but when you come to ascend it, probably you'll think it high enough."

"Oh, ascend it! ascend it, my dear captain! What would be the good after Humboldt and Bonplan! That Humboldt was a great genius. He made the ascent of this mountain, and has given a description of it, which leaves nothing unsaid. He tells us that it comprises five different zones—the zone of the vines, the zone of the laurels, the zone of the pines, the zone of Alpine heaths; and, lastly, the zone of sterility. He set his foot on the very summit, and found that there was not even room to sit down. The view from the summit was very extensive, stretching over an area equal to a fourth part of Spain. Then he went right down into the volcano, and examined the extinct crater. What could I do, I should like you to tell me, after that great man?"

"Well, certainly there isn't much left to glean. That is vexing, too, for you would find it dull work waiting for a vessel in the Peak of Teneriffe."

"But, I say, Mangles, my dear fellow, are there no ports in the Cape Verde Islands that we might touch at?"

"Oh, yes, nothing would be easier than putting you off at Villa Praya."

"And then I should have one advantage, which is by no means inconsiderable; I should find fellow-countrymen at Senegal, and that is not far away from those islands. I am quite aware that the group is said to be devoid of much interest, and wild and unhealthy,

but everything is curious in the eyes of a geographer. Seeing is a science. There are people who do not know how to use their eyes, and who travel about with as much intelligence as a shell-fish. But that's not in my line, I assure you."

"Please yourself, Monsieur Paganel. I have no doubt geographical science will be a gainer by your sojourn in the Cape Verde Islands. We must go in there anyhow for coal, so your disembarkation will not occasion the least delay."

The captain gave immediate orders for the yacht to continue her route, steering to the west of the Canary Group, and leaving Teneriffe on her larboard. She made rapid progress, and passed the Tropic of Cancer on the 2nd of September at 5 a.m.

The weather now began to change, and the atmosphere became damp and heavy. It was the rainy season, "*le tempo das aguas,*" as the Spanish call it, a trying season to travellers, but useful to the inhabitants of the African islands, who lack trees, and consequently water. The rough weather prevented the passengers from going on deck, but did not make the conversation any the less animated in the saloon.

On the 3rd of September, Paganel began to collect his luggage to go on shore. The *Duncan* was already steaming among the islands. She passed Sal, a complete tomb of sand, lying barren and desolate, and went on, along the vast coral reefs and athwart the Isle St. Jacques, with its long chain of basaltic mountains, till she entered the port of Villa Praya, and anchored in

eight fathoms of water before the town. The weather was frightful, and the surf excessively violent, though the bay was sheltered from the sea winds. The rain fell in such torrents that the town was scarcely visible through it. It rose on a plain, in the form of a terrace, buttressed on volcanic rocks three hundred feet high. The appearance of the island through the thick veil of rain was mournful in the extreme.

Lady Helena could not go on shore as she had purposed; indeed, even coaling was a difficult business, and the passengers had to content themselves below the poop as best they might. Naturally enough, the main topic of conversation was the weather. Everybody had something to say about it except the Major, who surveyed the universal deluge with the utmost indifference. Paganel walked up and down, shaking his head.

"It is clear enough, Paganel," said Lord Glenarvan, "that the elements are against you."

"I'll be even with them for all that," replied the Frenchman.

"You could not face rain like that, Monsieur Paganel," said Lady Helena.

"Oh, quite well, madam, as far as I myself am concerned. It is for my luggage and instruments that I am afraid. Everything will be ruined."

"The disembarking is the worst part of the business. Once at Villa Praya, you might manage to find pretty good quarters They wouldn't be over clean, and you might find the monkeys and pigs not always the most agreeable companions. But travellers are not too

particular, and, moreover, in seven or eight months you would get a ship, I dare say, to take you back to Europe."

"Seven or eight months!" exclaimed Paganel.

"At least. The Cape Verde Islands are not much frequented by ships during the rainy season. But you can employ your time usefully. This archipelago is still but little known."

"You can go up the large rivers," suggested Lady Helena.

"There are none, madam."

"Well, then, the small ones."

"There are none, madam."

"The running brooks, then."

"There are no brooks either."

"You can console yourself with the forests, if that's the case," put in the Major.

"You can't make forests without trees, and there are no trees."

"A charming country!" said the Major.

"Comfort yourself, my dear Paganel, you'll have the mountains at any rate," said Glenarvan.

"Oh, they are neither lofty nor interesting, my Lord, and, besides, they have been described already."

"Already!" said Lord Glenarvan.

"Yes, that is always my luck. At the Canary Islands, I saw myself anticipated by Humboldt, and here by M. Charles Sainte-Claire Deville, a geologist."

"Impossible!"

"It is too true," replied Paganel, in a doleful voice.

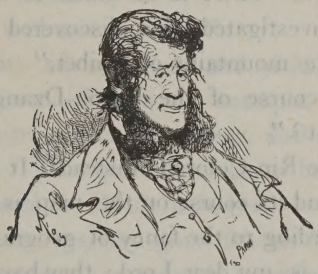
"Monsieur Deville was on board the Government corvette, *La Décidée,* when she touched at the Cape Verde Islands, and he explored the most interesting of the group, and went to the top of the volcano in Isle Fogo. What is left for me to do after him?"

"It is really a great pity," said Helena. "What will become of you, Monsieur Paganel."

Paganel remained silent.

"You would certainly have done much better to have landed at Madeira, even though there had been no wine," said Glenarvan.

Still the learned secretary was silent.



"I should wait," said the Major, just as if he had said, "I should not wait."

Paganel spoke again at length, and said—

"My dear Glenarvan, where do you mean to touch next?"

"At Concepcion."

"Plague it! That is a long way out of the road to India."

"Not it! From the moment you pass Cape Horn, you are getting nearer to it."

"I doubt it much."

"Besides," resumed Lord Glenarvan, with perfect gravity, "when people are going to the Indies, it doesn't matter much whether it is to the East or West."

"What! it does not matter much?"

"Without taking into account the fact that the inhabitants of the Pampas in Patagonia are as much Indians as the natives of the Punjaub."

"Well done, my Lord. That's a reason that would never have entered my head!"

"And then, my dear Paganel, you can gain the gold medal anywhere. There is as much to be done, and sought, and investigated, and discovered in the Cordilleras as in the mountains of Thibet."

"But the course of the Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou—what about that?"

"Go up the Rio Colorado instead. It is a river but little known, and its course on the map is marked out too much according to the fancy of geographers."

"I know it is, my dear Lord; they have made grave mistakes. Oh, I make no question that the Geographical Society would have sent me to Patagonia as soon as to India, if I had sent in a request to that effect. But I never thought of it."

"Just like you."

"Come, Monsieur Paganel, will you go with us?" asked Lady Helena, in her most winning tone.

"Madam, my mission?"

"We shall pass through the Straits of Magellan, I must tell you," said Lord Glenarvan.

"My Lord, you are a tempter."

"Let me add, that we shall visit Port Famine."

"Port Famine!" exclaimed the Frenchman, besieged on all sides. "That famous port in French annals!"

"Think, too, Monsieur Paganel, that by taking part in our enterprise, you will be linking France with Scotland."

"Undoubtedly."

"A geographer would be of no use to our expedition, and what can be nobler than to bring science to the service of humanity?"

"That's well said, madam."

"Take my advice, then, and yield to chance, or rather providence. Follow our example. It was providence that sent us the document, and we set out in consequence. The same providence brought you on board the *Duncan*. Don't leave her."

"Shall I say yes, my good friends? Come, now, tell me, you want me very much to stay, don't you?" said Paganel.

"And you're dying to stay, now, aren't you, Paganel?" returned Glenarvan.

"That's about it," confessed the learned geographer; "but I was afraid it would be inconsiderate."

CHAPTER IX.

THE STRAITS OF MAGELLAN.

THE joy on board was universal when Paganel's resolution was made known.

Little Robert flung himself on his neck in such tumultuous delight that he nearly threw the worthy secretary down, and made him say, "Rude *petit bonhomme.* I'll teach him geography."

Robert bade fair to be an accomplished gentleman some day, for John Mangles was to make a sailor of him, and the Major was to teach him *sang-froid,* and Glenarvan and Lady Helena were to instil into him courage and goodness and generosity, while Mary was to inspire him with gratitude towards such instructors.

The *Duncan* soon finished taking in coal, and turned her back on the dismal region. She fell in before long with the current from the coast of Brazil, and on the 7th of September entered the southern hemisphere.

So far, then, the voyage had been made without difficulty. Everybody was full of hope, for in this search for Captain Grant, each day seemed to increase the probability of finding him. The captain was among

the most confident on board, but his confidence mainly arose from the longing desire he had to see Miss Mary happy. He was smitten with quite a peculiar interest for this young girl, and managed to conceal his senti-

ments so well that every one on board saw it except himself and Mary Grant.

As for the learned geographer, he was probably the happiest man in all the southern hemisphere. He spent the whole day in studying maps, which were spread out

on the saloon table, to the great annoyance of M. Olbinett, who could never get the cloth laid for meals, without disputes on the subject. But all the passengers took his part except the Major, who was perfectly indifferent about geographical questions, especially at dinner-time. Paganel also came across a regular cargo of old books in the chief officer's chest. They were in a very damaged condition, but among them he raked out a few Spanish volumes, and determined forthwith to set to work to master the language of Cervantes, as no one on board understood it, and it would be helpful in their search along the Chilian coast. Thanks to his taste for languages, he did not despair of being able to speak the language fluently when they arrived at Concepcion. He studied it furiously, and kept constantly muttering heterogeneous syllables.

He spent his leisure hours in teaching young Robert, and instructed him in the history of the country they were so rapidly approaching.

One day he gave Glenarvan a piece of information which was quite new to him, as it would be to many, even of the best informed people.

It was on the 10th of September, and they were in latitude 5° 37′ and longitude 31° 15′, and Paganel was relating the history of the discovery of America. In speaking of Christopher Columbus, he stated that the great Genoese had died without being aware that he had discovered a new world.

Everyone exclaimed at this, but Paganel persisted in his assertion, and added:

"Nothing is more certain. I have no wish to lessen the glory of Columbus, but it is a positive fact, at the close of the fifteenth century, the all-engrossing question of the day was how to facilitate communication with Asia by the western routes, or, in other words, to find the quickest road to the spice countries. This was what tempted Columbus. He made four voyages, and touched America on the shores of Cumana, Honduras, Mosquitia, Nicaragua, Veragua, Costa Rica, and Panama, which he supposed were parts of Japan and China, and died in ignorance of the existence of the vast continent to which he was not even to bequeath his name."

"I don't wish to disbelieve you, my dear Paganel," replied Glenarvan, "but you must allow me to express my surprise, and also to ask you who the navigators were that found out the truth about the discoveries of Columbus?"

"His successors. Ojida, who had accompanied him in his voyages, and Vincent Pinzon, Vespucius, Mendoza, Bastidas, Cabral, Solis, and Balboa. These navigators sailed along the eastern side of America, and settled its limits by going down south, caught by the same current which is speeding in the same direction now, three hundred and sixty years later. See, my friends, we have crossed the Equator at precisely the same place where Pinzon crossed it in the closing year of the fifteenth century. A year after, the Portuguese, Cabral, went down as far as Port Seguro, and in 1502 Vespucius went still further. In 1508,

Pinzon and Solis started on a joint expedition to explore the American coast; and in 1514 Solis discovered the mouth of Rio de la Plata, where he was devoured by the natives, leaving to Magellan the glory of rounding the continent. That great navigator, in 1519, sailed with five ships, went along the coast of Patagonia, discovered Port Desire and Port Julian, where he made a long stay, found in latitude 52° the Straits of the Eleven Thousand Virgins, which in future were to be called the Straits of Magellan, and in 1520, on the 28th of November, came out into the Pacific Ocean. Ah! what joy he must have felt, and what emotion must have swelled his heart, when his eye first fell on the sparkling waves of a new sea lying on the horizon in the sunlight!"

"Oh, Monsieur Paganel," exclaimed Robert, enthusiastically, "I wish I had been there."

"So do I, my boy, and I wouldn't have missed the chance if Heaven had only sent me into the world three hundred years sooner."

"That would have been a pity for us, Monsieur Paganel," said Lady Helena, "for then you wouldn't have been on the *Duncan* telling us all this."

"Some one else would have told it you instead, and he would have added that the discovery of the western coast is due to the Pizarros, two brothers. These fearless adventurers were great founders of cities. Cusco, Quito, Lima, Santiago, Villarica, Valparaiso, and Concepcion, where the *Duncan* is going, are their work. The outline of the newly-discovered continent

soon appeared in the charts of the period, to the great satisfaction of the learned in the Old World."

"Well," said Robert, "I should not have been satisfied."

"Why not?" asked Mary, glancing at her brother's animated countenance.

"Yes, tell us why, my boy," added Lord Glenarvan, with the most encouraging smile.

"Because I should have liked to know what there was beyond the Straits of Magellan."

"Bravo, little man!" replied Paganel. "I should have liked to know that too, and whether the continent extended to the Pole, or whether there was an open sea, as Drake, one of your countrymen, conjectured. So it is quite clear that, if Robert Grant and Jacques Paganel had lived in the seventeenth century, we should have embarked among the followers of Shouten and Lemaire, two Dutchmen, who were curious to get to the bottom of this geographical enigma."

"Were they geographers?" inquired Lady Helena.

"No, they were bold merchants, who cared little about the scientific side of discoveries. There was a Dutch East India Company at that time, which had the absolute privilege of trade through the Straits of Magellan. As no other passage to the East was known then, this privilege was a complete monopoly. Several merchants determined to overthrow it by discovering another route, and among the number was a certain Isaac Lemaire, a man of education and intelligence. He bore all the expense of an expedition, commanded

by his nephew, Jacob Lemaire, and Thornton, a good sailor, a native of Horn. These intrepid navigators set out in the month of June, 1615, nearly a century after Magellan. They discovered Lemaire Strait, between Terra del Fuego and Staten Island, and on the 12th of February, 1616, they doubled the famous Cape Horn, which better deserves than his brother, the Cape of Good Hope, to be called the Cape of Storms."

"Yes, indeed, I should have liked to have been there," cried Robert.

"And you would have drunk at the fountain-head of one of the keenest pleasures that can be enjoyed. Can there be, indeed, a more genuine satisfaction than that which the navigator feels who pricks his discoveries on the chart. He sees countries gradually forming before his eye; island by island, promontory by promontory, almost so to speak, emerging from the waves. At length the outline is completed; the lines which, at first, were uncertain, broken and interrupted, are united; the isolated bays fit into the hollows in the coast, and the capes lean on well-determined shores; till, finally, the new continent, with its lakes, and rivers, and streams, mountains, valleys, and plains, lie spread out on the globe in all its magnificent splendour. Ah, friends, a discoverer of countries is a true inventor, and experiences all his emotions and surprises. But this mine is nearly exhausted now! Everything has been seen, and explored, and found out about continents and new worlds, and we late-comers in geographical science have nothing left to do."

"Yes, we have, Paganel," replied Glenarvan.

"What is it, then?"

"What we are doing now."

Meantime, the *Duncan* was steaming and sailing along with marvellous rapidity. On the 15th of September she passed the Tropic of Capricorn, and turned her beak-head towards the entrance of the celebrated straits. Several times the flat coast of Patagonia was perceived, but only like a faint line on the horizon, for it was full ten miles distant, and even Paganel's famous telescope gave but an indistinct idea of its appearance.

On the 25th of September, the yacht arrived off the Straits of Magellan, and entered them without delay. This route is generally preferred by steamers on their way to the Pacific Ocean. The exact length of the straits is 372 miles. Ships of the largest tonnage find, throughout, sufficient depth of water, even close to the shore, and there is a good bottom everywhere, and abundance of fresh water, and rivers abounding in fish, and forests in game, and plenty of safe and accessible harbours; in fact, a thousand things which are lacking in Strait Lemaire and Cape Horn, with its terrible rocks, incessantly visited by hurricane and tempest.

For the first three or four hours—that is to say, for about sixty to eighty miles, as far as Cape Gregory—the coast on either side was low and sandy. Jacques Paganel would not lose a single point of view, nor a single detail of the straits. It would scarcely take thirty-six hours to go through them, and the moving panorama on both sides, seen in all the clearness and

glory of the light of a southern sun, was well worth the trouble of looking at and admiring. On the Terra del Fuego side, a few wretched-looking creatures were wandering about on the rocks, but on the other side not a solitary inhabitant was visible.

Paganel was so vexed at not being able to catch a glimpse of any Patagonians, that his companions were quite amused at him. He would insist that Patagonia without Patagonians was not Patagonia at all.

But Glenarvan replied—

"Patience, my worthy geographer. We shall see the Patagonians yet."

"I am not so sure of it."

"But there is such a people, anyhow," said Lady Helena.

"I doubt it much, madam, since I don't see them."

"But surely the very name Patagonia, which means 'great feet' in Spanish, would not have been given to imaginary beings."

"Oh, the name is nothing," said Paganel, who was arguing simply for the sake of arguing. "And besides, to speak the truth, we are not sure if that is their name."

"What an idea!" exclaimed Glenarvan. "Did you know that, Major?"

"No," replied McNabbs, "and wouldn't give a Scotch pound-note for the information."

"You shall hear it, however, Major Indifferent. Though Magellan called the natives Patagonians, the Fuegians call them Tiremenen, the Chilians Caucalhues,

the colonists of Carmen Tehuelches, the Araucans Huiliches; Bougainville gives them the name of Chauha, and Falkner that of Tehuelhets. The name they give themselves is Inaken. Now, tell me, then, how would you recognize them? Indeed, is it likely that a people with so many names has any actual existence?"

"That's a queer argument, certainly," said Lady Helena.

"Well, let us admit it," said her husband; "but our friend Paganel must own that even if there are doubts about the name of the race, there is none about their size."

"Indeed, I will never own anything so outrageous as that," replied Paganel.

"They are tall," said Glenarvan.

"I don't know that."

"Are they little, then?" asked Lady Helena.

"No one can affirm that they are."

"About the average, then?" said McNabbs.

"I do not know that either."

"That's going a little too far," said Glenarvan. "Travellers who have seen them tell us."

"Travellers who have seen them," interrupted Paganel, "don't agree at all in their accounts. Magellan said that his head scarcely reached their waist."

"Well, then, that proves."

"Yes, but Drake declares that the English are taller than the tallest Patagonian?"

"Oh, the English—that may be," replied the Major, disdainfully, "but we are talking of the Scotch."

"Cavendish assures us that they are tall and robust," continued Paganel. "Hawkins makes out they are giants. Lemaire and Shouten declare that they are eleven feet high."

"These are all creditable witnesses," said Glenarvan.

"Yes, quite as much as Wood, Narborough, and Falkner, who say they are of medium stature. Again, Byron, Giraudais, Bougainville, Wallis, and Carteret, declare that the Patagonians are six feet six inches tall."

"But what is the truth, then, among all those contradictions?" asked Lady Helena.

"Just this, madam; the Patagonians have short legs, and a large bust; or by way of a joke, we might say that these natives are six feet high when they are sitting, and only five when they are standing."

"Bravo! my dear geographer," said Glenarvan. "That is very well put."

"Unless the race has no existence, that would reconcile all statements," returned Paganel. "But here is one consolation, at all events: the Straits of Magellan are very magnificent, even without Patagonians."

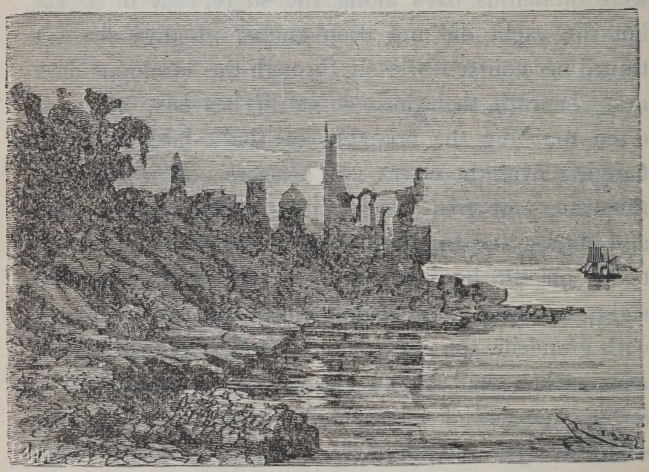
Just at this moment the *Duncan* was rounding the peninsula of Brunswick between splendid panoramas.

Seventy miles after doubling Cape Gregory, she left on her starboard the penitentiary of Punta Arena The church steeple and the Chilian flag gleamed for an instant among the trees, and then the Strait wound on

between huge granitic masses which had an imposing effect. Cloud-capped mountains appeared, their heads white with eternal snows, and their feet hid in immense forests. Towards the south-west, Mount Tarn rose 6,500 feet high. Night came on after a long lingering twilight, the light insensibly melting away into soft shade. These brilliant constellations began to bestud the sky, and the Southern Cross shone out. There were numerous bays along the shore, easy of access, but the yacht did not drop anchor in any; she continued her course fearlessly through the luminous darkness, beneath the glorious starlit heavens, her yards often touching the branches of the antarctic beeches hanging over the waves, and her screw often ploughing the waters of great rivers, and rousing up the geese, and ducks, and snipes, and teal, and all the feathered tribes on the humid banks. Presently ruins came in sight, crumbling buildings, which the night invested with grandeur, the sad remains of a deserted settlement, whose name will be an eternal protest against these fertile shores and forests full of game. The *Duncan* was passing Port Famine.

It was in that very spot that Sarmiento, a Spaniard, came in 1581 with four hundred emigrants to establish a colony. He founded the city of St. Philip, but the extreme severity of winter decimated the inhabitants, and those who had struggled through the cold died subsequently of starvation. In 1581, Cavendish the Corsair, discovered the last survivor dying of hunger, in the ruins of a city six centuries old, after six years of existence.

After sailing along these deserted shores, the *Duncan* went through a series of narrow passes, between forests of beech and ash and birch, and at length doubled Cape Froward, still bristling with the ice of the last winter. On the other side of the strait, in Terra del Fuego, stood Mount Sarmiento, towering to a height of six thousand feet, an enormous accumulation of rocks,



separated by bands of cloud, forming a sort of aërial archipelago in the sky.

It is at Cape Froward that the American continent actually terminates, for Cape Horn is nothing but a rock sunk in the sea in latitude 52°.

After clearing this point, the straits narrowed between the peninsula of Brunswick and Desolation

Island, a long island which stretches out amid a thousand tiny islets, like an enormous whale stranded on pebbles.

A continuation of bare coast now succeeded to the fertile shores along which the yacht had been sailing, wild in aspect, and full of creeks made by the myriad windings of these intricate straits. But the *Duncan* held on her course through the inextricable labyrinth without mistake or uncertainty, passing by the different manufactories established by the Spanish on the deserted shores, without slackening speed. At Cape Lemax the straits widened, and she was able to get round Narborough Isles and advance in a more southerly direction, till at length the rock of Cape Pilares, the extreme point of Desolation Island, came in sight, thirty-six hours after entering the straits. Before her stem lay a broad, open, sparkling ocean, which Jacques Paganel greeted with enthusiastic gestures, feeling kindred emotions with those which stirred the bosom of Ferdinand de Magellan himself, when the sails of his ship, the *Trinidad*, first bent before the breeze from the great Pacific.

CHAPTER X.

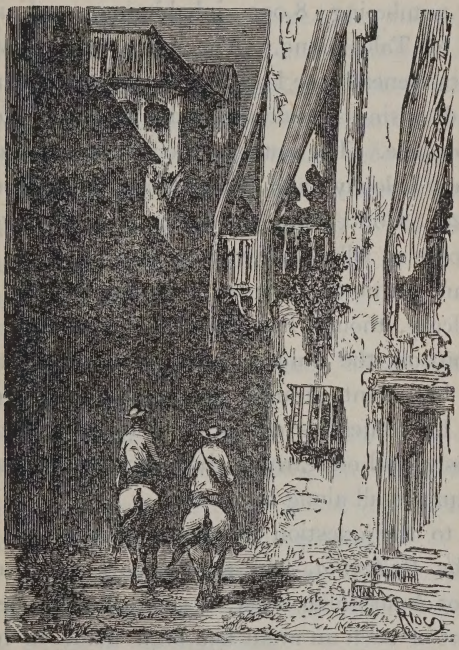
THE THIRTY-SEVENTH PARALLEL OF LATITUDE.

A WEEK after they had doubled the Cape Pilares, the *Duncan* steamed into the Bay of Talcahuano, a magnificent estuary, twelve miles long and nine broad. The weather was splendid. From November to March the sky is always cloudless, and a constant south wind prevails, as the coast is sheltered by the mountain chain of the Andes. In obedience to Lord Glenarvan's order, John Mangles had sailed as near the archipelago of Chiloe as possible, and examined all the creeks and windings of the coast, hoping to discover some traces of the shipwreck. A broken spar, or any fragment of the vessel, would have put them in the right track, but nothing whatever was visible, and the yacht continued her route, till she dropped anchor in the port of Talcahuano, forty-two days from the time she had sailed out of the fogs of the Clyde.

Glenarvan had a boat lowered immediately, and went on shore, accompanied by Paganel. The learned geographer gladly availed himself of the opportunity of making use of the language he had been studying so

conscientiously, but to his great amazement, found he could not make himself understood by the people. "It is the accent I've not got," he said.

"Let us go to the Custom-house," replied Glenarvan.



They were informed on arriving there, by means of a few English words, aided by expressive gestures, that the British Consul lived at Concepcion, an hour's ride distant. Glenarvan found no difficulty in procuring two fleet horses, and he and Paganel were soon within

the walls of the great city, due to the enterprising genius of Valdivia, the valiant comrade of the Pizarros.

How it was shorn of its ancient splendour! Often pillaged by the natives, burnt in 1819, it lay in desolation and ruins, its walls still blackened by the flames, scarcely numbering 8,000 inhabitants, and already eclipsed by Talcahuano. The grass was growing in the streets, beneath the lazy feet of the citizens, and all trade and business, indeed any description of activity, was impossible. The notes of the mandoline resounded from every balcony, and languishing songs floated on the breeze. Concepcion, the ancient city of brave men, had become a village of women and children. Lord Glenarvan felt no great desire to inquire into the causes of this decay, though Paganel tried to draw him into a discussion on the subject. He would not delay an instant, but went straight on to the house of Mr. Bentick, his Majesty's consul, who received them very courteously, and on learning their errand, undertook to make inquiries all along the coast.

But to the question whether a three-mast vessel, called the *Britannia*, had gone ashore either on the Chilian or Araucanian coast, he gave a decided negative. No report of such an event had been made to him, or any of the other consuls. Glenarvan, however, would not allow himself to be disheartened; he went back to Talcahuano, and spared neither pains nor expense to make a thorough investigation of the whole seaboard. But it was all in vain. The most minute inquiries were fruitless, and Lord Glenarvan returned to the yacht

to report his ill-success. Mary Grant and her brother could not restrain their grief. Lady Helena did her best to comfort them by loving caresses, while Jacques Paganel took up the document and began studying it again. He had been poring over it for more than an hour, when Glenarvan interrupted him and said:—

"Paganel! I appeal to your sagacity. Have we made an erroneous interpretation of the document? Is there anything illogical about the meaning?"

Paganel was silent, absorbed in reflection.

"Have we mistaken the place where the catastrophe occurred?" continued Glenarvan. "Does not the name Patagonia seem apparent, even to the least clear-sighted individual."

Paganel was still silent.

"Besides," said Glenarvan, "does not the word *Indien* prove we are right?"

"Perfectly so," replied McNabbs.

"And is it not evident then, that at the moment of writing the words, the shipwrecked men were expecting to be made prisoners by the Indians."

"I take exception to that, my Lord," said Paganel; "and even if your other conclusions are right, this, at least, seems to me irrational."

"What do you mean?" asked Lady Helena, while all eyes were fixed on the geographer.

"I mean this," replied Paganel, "that Captain Grant is *now a prisoner among the Indians;* and I further add that the document states it unmistakably."

"Explain yourself, sir," said Mary Grant.

"Nothing is plainer, dear Mary. Instead of reading the document *seront prisonniers,* read *sont prisonniers,* and the whole thing is clear."

"But that is impossible," replied Lord Glenarvan.

"Impossible! and why my noble friend?" asked Paganel, smiling.

"Because the bottle could only have been thrown into the sea just when the vessel went to pieces on the rocks, and consequently the latitude and longitude given refer to the actual place of the shipwreck."

"There is no proof of that," replied Paganel, "and I see nothing to preclude the supposition that the poor fellows were dragged into the interior by the Indians, and sought to make known the place of their captivity by means of this bottle."

"Except this fact, my dear Paganel, that there was no sea, and therefore they could not have flung the bottle into it."

"Unless they flung it into rivers which ran into the sea," returned Paganel.

This reply was so unexpected, and yet so admissible, that it made them all completely silent for a minute, though their beaming eyes betrayed the rekindling of hope in their hearts. Lady Helena was the first to speak.

"What an idea!" she exclaimed.

"And what a good idea," was Paganel's naive rejoinder.

"What would you advise, then?" said Glenarvan.

"My advice is to follow the 37th parallel from the

point where it touches the American continent to where it dips into the Atlantic, without deviating from it half a degree, and possibly in some part of its course we shall fall in with the shipwrecked party."

"There is a poor chance of that," said the Major.

"Poor as it is," returned Paganel, "we ought not to lose it. If I am right in my conjecture that the bottle has been carried into the sea on the bosom of some river, we cannot fail to find the track of the prisoners. You can easily convince yourselves of this by looking at this map of the country."

He unrolled a map of Chili and the Argentine provinces as he spoke, and spread it out on the table.

"Just follow me for a moment," he said, "across the American continent. Let us make a stride across the narrow strip of Chili, and over the Cordilleras of the Andes, and get into the heart of the Pampas. Shall we find any lack of rivers and streams and currents? No, for here are the Rio Negro and the Rio Colorado, and their tributaries intersected by the 37th parallel, and any of them might have carried the bottle on its waters. Then, perhaps, in the midst of a tribe in some Indian settlement on the shores of these almost unknown rivers, those whom I may call my friends await some providential intervention. Ought we to disappoint their hopes? Do you not all agree with me that it is our duty to go along the line my finger is pointing out at this moment on the map, and if after all we find I have been mistaken, still to keep straight on and follow

the 37th parallel till we find those we seek, if even we go right round the world."

His generous enthusiasm so touched his auditors that, involuntarily, they rose to their feet and grasped his hands, while Robert exclaimed as he devoured the map with his eyes,

"Yes! my father is there!"

"And where he is," replied Glenarvan, "we'll manage to go, my boy, and find him. Nothing can be more logical than Paganel's theory, and we must follow the course he points out without the least hesitation. Captain Grant may have fallen into the hands of a numerous tribe, or his captors may be but a handful. In the latter case we shall carry him off at once, but in the event of the former, after we have reconnoitred the situation, we must go back to the *Duncan* on the eastern coast and get to Buenos Ayres, where we can soon organize a detachment of men, with Major McNabbs at their head, strong enough to tackle all the Indians in the Argentine provinces."

"That's capital, my Lord!" said John Mangles, "and I may add, that there is no danger whatever connected with crossing the continent!"

"Neither danger nor fatigue," said Paganel. "How many have done it already, who had neither our facility of transit nor our grand purpose to inspire their courage! Didn't a certain Basilio Villarmo go from Carmen to the Cordilleras in 1782? And in 1806 a Chilian, the alcaide of Concepcion, Don Luis de la Cruz, set out from Antuco, and keeping close to the

very same degree of latitude, got right over the Andes, and arrived at Buenos Ayres, making the journey in forty days. In our own time, too, have not Colonel Garcia, M. Alcide d'Orbigny, and my honourable colleague, Dr. Martin de Moussy, explored the country in all directions, and what they have done for science we will do for humanity."

"Oh, sir, sir," said Mary, her voice trembling with emotion, "how shall I be grateful enough for a devotion which exposes you to such danger?"

"Danger!" said Paganel. "Who talks of danger?"

"Not I," returned Robert, with sparkling eyes and courageous looks."

"Danger!" repeated Paganel. "Where is it? Besides, after all, what is it we are going to do? to make a journey of scarcely 350 leagues, for we shall go in a straight line, a journey in a latitude corresponding to that of Spain and Sicily and Greece in the other hemisphere, and consequently with almost the same climate; and a journey, lastly, which will not take up more than a month. It is a mere excursion!"

"Monsieur Paganel," asked Lady Helena, "you have no fear then that if the poor fellows have fallen into the hands of the Indians their lives at least have been spared."

"What a question? Why, madam, the Indians are not anthropophagi! Far from it. One of my own countrymen, M. Guinnard, associated with me in the Geographical Society, was three years a prisoner among

the Indians in the Pampas. He had to endure sufferings and ill-treatment, but came off victorious at last. A European is a useful being in these countries. The Indians know his value, and take care of him as if he were some costly animal."

"There is not the least room then for hesitation," said Lord Glenarvan. "Go we must, and as soon as possible. What route must we take?"

"One that is both easy and agreeable," replied Paganel. "Rather mountainous at first, and then sloping gently down the eastern side of the Andes into a smooth plain, turfed and gravelled quite like a garden."

"Let us see the map?" said the Major.

"Here it is, my dear McNabbs. We shall go through the capital of Araucania, and cut the Cordilleras by the pass of Antuco, leaving the volcano on the south, and gliding gently down the mountain sides, past the Neuquem and the Rio Colorado on to the Pampas, till we reach the Sierra Tapalquen, from whence we shall see the frontier of the province of Buenos Ayres. These we shall pass by, and cross over the Sierra Tandil, pursuing our search to the very shores of the Atlantic, as far as Point Medano."

Paganel went through this programme of the expedition without so much as a glance at the map. He was so posted up in the travels of Frézier, Molina, Humboldt, Miers, and Orbigny, that he had the geographical nomenclature at his fingers' ends, and could trust implicitly to his never-failing memory.

"You see then, friend," he added, "that it is a straight course. In thirty days we shall have gone over it, and gained the eastern side before the *Duncan*, however little she may be delayed by the westerly wind."

"Then the *Duncan* is to cruise between Corientes and Cape Saint Antoine," said John Mangles.

"Just so."

"And how is the expedition to be organized?" asked Glenarvan.

"As simply as possible. All there is be done is to reconnoitre the situation of Captain Grant, and not to come to gunshot with the Indians. I think that Lord Glenarvan, our natural leader; the Major, who would not yield his place to anybody; and your humble servant Jacques Paganel."

"And me," interrupted Robert.

"Robert, Robert!" exclaimed Mary.

"And why not?" returned Paganel. "Travels form the youthful mind. Yes, Robert, we four and three of the sailors."

"And does your Lordship mean to pass me by?" said John Mangles, addressing his master.

"My dear John," replied Glenarvan, "we leave passengers on board, those dearer to us than life, and who is to watch over them but the devoted captain?"

"Then we can't accompany you?" said Lady Helena, while a shade of sadness beclouded her eyes.

"My dear Helena, the journey will so soon

accomplished that it will be but a brief separation, and——"

"Yes, dear, I understand, it is all right; and I do hope you may succeed."

"Besides, you can hardly call it a journey," added Paganel.

"What is it then?"

"It is just making a flying passage across the continent, the way a good man goes through the world, doing all the good he can. *Transire Beneficiendo*—that is our motto."

This ended the discussion, if a conversation can be so called, where all who take part in it are of the same opinion. Preparations commenced the same day, but as secretly as possible, to prevent the Indians getting scent of it.

The day of departure was fixed for the 14th of October. The sailors were all so eager to join the expedition that Glenarvan found the only way to prevent jealousy among them was to draw lots who should go. This was accordingly done, and fortune favoured the chief officer, Tom Austin, Wilson, a strong, jovial young fellow, and Mulrady, so good a boxer that he might have entered the lists with Tom Sayers himself.

Glenarvan displayed the greatest activity about the preparations, for he was anxious to be ready by the appointed day. John Mangles was equally busy in coaling the vessel, that she might weigh anchor at the same time. There was quite a rivalry between Glenar-

van and the young captain about getting first to the Argentine coast.

Both were ready on the 14th. The whole search party assembled in the saloon to bid farewell to those who remained behind. The *Duncan* was just about to get under weigh, and already the vibration of the screw began to agitate the limpid waters of Talcahuano. Glenarvan, Paganel, McNabbs, Robert Grant, Tom Austin, Wilson, and Mulrady, stood armed with carbines and Colt's revolvers. Guides and mules awaited them at the landing stairs of the harbour.

"It is time," said Lord Glenarvan at last.

"Go, then, dear Edward," said Lady Helena, restraining her emotion.

Lord Glenarvan clasped her closely to his breast for an instant, and then turned away, while Robert flung his arms round Mary's neck.

"And now, friends," said Paganel, "let's have one good hearty shake of the hand all round, to last us till we get to the shores of the Atlantic."

This was not much to ask, but he certainly got strong enough grips to go some way towards satisfying his desire.

All went on deck now, and the seven explorers left the vessel. They were soon on the quay, and as the yacht turned round to pursue her course, she came so near where they stood, that Lady Helena could exchange farewells once more.

"God help you!" she called out.

"Heaven will help us, madam," shouted Paganel,

in reply, "for you may be sure we'll help ourselves."

"Go on," sung out the captain to his engineer.

At the same moment Lord Glenarvan gave the signal to start, and away went the mules along the coast, while the *Duncan* steamed out at full speed towards the broad ocean.

CHAPTER XI.

THROUGH CHILI.

THE native troops organized by Lord Glenarvan consisted of three men and a boy. The captain of the muleteers was an Englishman, who had become naturalised through twenty years' residence in the country. He made a livelihood by letting out mules to travellers, and leading them over the difficult passes of the Cordilleras, after which he gave them in charge of a *baqueano,* or Argentine guide, to whom the route through the Pampas was perfectly familiar. This Englishman had not so far forgotten his mother tongue among mules and Indians that he could not converse with his countrymen, and a lucky thing it was for them, as Lord Glenarvan found it far easier to give orders and to see them executed. Paganel was still unsuccessful in making himself understood.

The *catapez,* as he was called in Chilian, had two natives called *peons,* and a boy about twelve years of age under him. The *peons* took care of the baggage mules, and the boy led the *madrina,* a young mare adorned with rattle and bells, which walked in front,

followed by ten mules. The travellers rode seven of these, and the *catapez* another. The remaining two carried provisions and a few bales of goods, intended to secure the goodwill of the Caciques of the plain. The *peons* walked, according to their usual habit.

Every arrangement had been made to ensure safety and speed, for crossing the Andes is something more

than an ordinary journey. It could not be accomplished without the help of the hardy mules of the far-famed Argentine breed. Those reared in the country are much superior ro their progenitors. They are not particular about their food, and only drink once a day, and they can go with ease ten leagues in eight hours, and carry, uncomplainingly, a load of 14 *arrobes*,* by Chilian reckoning.

* The *arrobes* is equal to 11 kilogrammes and 50 centigrammes.

There are no inns along this road from one ocean to another. The only viands on which travellers can regale themselves are dried meat, rice seasoned with pimento, and such game as may be shot *en route*. The torrents provide them with water in the mountains, and the rivulets in the plains, which they improve by the addition of a few drops of rum, and each man carries a supply of this in a bullock's horn, called *chiffle*. They have to be careful, however, not to indulge too freely in alcoholic drinks, as the climate itself has a peculiarly exhilarating effect on the nervous system. As for bedding, it is all contained in the saddle used by the natives, called *recado*. This saddle is made of sheepskins, tanned on one side and woolly on the other, fastened by gorgeous embroidered straps. Wrapped in these warm coverings a traveller may sleep soundly, and brave exposure to the damp nights.

Glenarvan, an experienced traveller, who knew how to adapt himself to the customs of other countries, adapted the Chilian costume for himself and his whole party. Paganel and Robert, both alike children, though of different growth, were wild with delight as they inserted their heads in the national *poncho*, an immense plaid with a hole in the centre, and their legs in high leather boots. The mules were richly caparisoned, with the Arab bit in their mouths, and long reins of plaited leather, which served as a whip; the headstall of the bridle was decorated with metal ornaments, and the *alforjas* double sacks of gay coloured linen, containing the day's provisions. Paganel, *distrait* as usual, was

fung several times before he succeeded in bestriding his good steed, but once in the saddle his inseparable telescope on his shoulder-belt, he held on well enough, keeping his feet fast in the stirrups, and trusting entirely to the sagacity of his beast. As for Robert, his first attempt at mounting was successful, and proved that he had the making in him of an excellent horseman.

The weather was splendid when they started, the sky a deep cloudless blue, and yet the atmosphere so tempered by the sea breezes as to prevent any feeling of oppressive heat. They marched rapidly along the winding shore of the bay of Talcahuano, in order to gain the extremity of the parallel, thirty miles south.

No one spoke much the first day, for the smoke of the *Duncan* was still visible on the horizon, and the pain of parting too keenly felt. Paganel talked to himself in Spanish, asking and answering questions.

The *catapez*, moreover, was a taciturn man naturally, and had not been rendered loquacious by his calling. He hardly spoke to his *peons*. They understood their duties perfectly. If one of the mules stopped, they urged it on with a guttural cry, and if that proved unavailing, a good-sized pebble, thrown with unerring aim, soon cured the animal's obstinacy. If a strap got loose, or a rein fell, a *peon* came forward instantly, and throwing off his poncho, flung it over the beast's head till the accident was repaired and the march resumed.

The custom of the muleteers is to start immediately after breakfast, about eight o'clock, and not to stop till they camp for the night, about 4 p.m. Glenarvan fell in with the practice, and the first halt was just as they arrived at Arauco, situated at the very extremity of th bay. To find the extremity of the 37th degree ol latitude, they would have required to proceed as far as the Bay of Carnero, twenty miles further. But the agents of Glenarvan had already scoured that part of the coast, and to repeat the exploration would have been useless. It was, therefore, decided that Arauco should be the point of departure, and they should keep on from there towards the east in a straight line.

The little party went into the town to spend the night, and camped in the open court of an inn, the

internal arrangements of which were still very primitive.

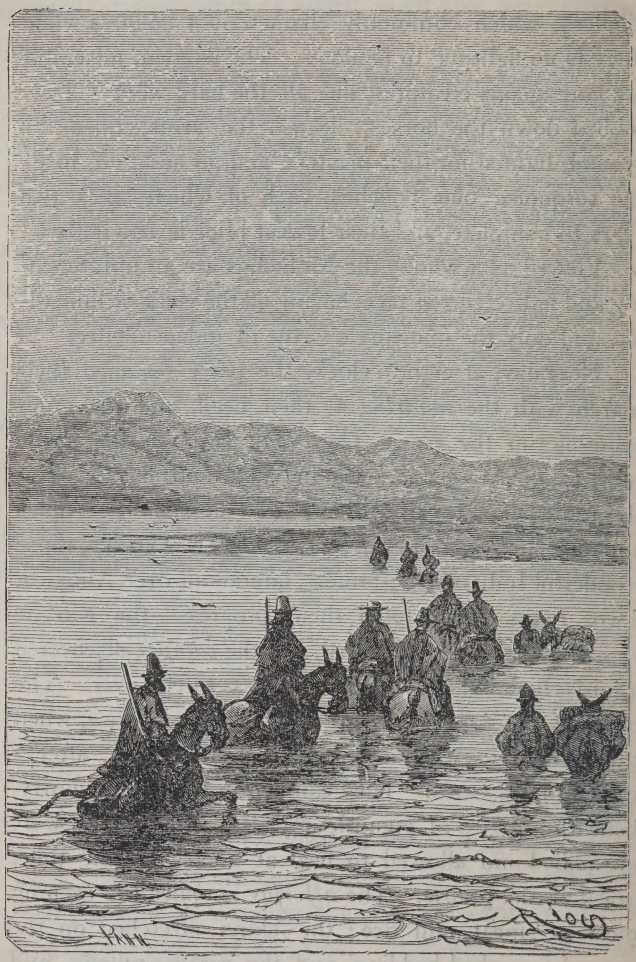
Arauco is the capital of Araucania, a state 150 leagues in length and 30 in breadth, inhabited by the Moluchos, those elder sons of the Chilian race, whose deeds have been sung by the poet Ercilla. They are a proud, fiery people, the only nation of both Americas that has never submitted of a foreign yoke. It is true that Arauco once belonged to the Spaniards, but those who inhabited it never owned their sway. They resisted then, as they resist now, the encroachments of Chili; and their independent flag, a white star on a field of azure, still floats from the summit of the fortified hill, which protects the town.

While supper was preparing, Glenarvan and Paganel, and the *catapez*, walked about among the stubble-thatched cottages of the town. Except a church and the ruins of a Franciscan monastery, there was little to be seen. Glenarvan tried to glean what information he could, but unsuccessfully. Paganel was in despair at not being able to make himself understood, but as the Araucanian was the only language spoken over the whole country, as far as the Straits of Magellan, his Spanish was about as intelligible as Hebrew. However, the learned geographer made good use of his eyes if he could not of his ears. He took great pleasure in noticing the different varieties of the Moluchos which met his gaze. They were all men of tall stature, with a flat face and copper-coloured skin, suspicious, distrustful eyes, bare chin, and large head

half hidden in long hair. They seemed addicted to idleness, which commonly characterises soldiers when there is no fighting to be done. The women, miserable but courageous creatures, did all the hard work. They rubbed down the horses, cleaned the arms, tilled the ground, hunted for their masters, and, in addition, made the turquoise blue pouches, each of which takes two years to complete, and their lowest price is 100 dollars.

Viewed as a whole, the Moluchos are an uninteresting and half-civilized race, having all the vices of humanity, and only the one single virtue of independence.

Next day, at eight o'clock, the party resumed their march with the *madrina* at their head, and the *peons* bringing up the rear. They went through the fertile territory of Araucania, rich in vines and flocks. But the route soon became dreary as a desert. For miles and miles not even a hut of a *rastreadore* was visible, those wonderful Indian horse-tamers, famous all over America. Two rivers interrupted their progress—the Rio de Raque and the Rio de Tubal, but the *catapez* discovered a ford which allowed them to pass safely over. The chain of the Andes was gradually rising to view, when they halted for the night, about four o'clock, after a march of 35 miles. They camped in the open country, beneath a group of gigantic myrtles. The mules were unsaddled and allowed to feed at liberty on the thick grass of the prairie. The *alforjas* supplies the evening meal of meat and rice; the skins stretched on the ground furnished bedding, and the *recados* pillows, and the whole party soon lay in refreshing slumber,



guarded by the *catapez* and the *peons*, who watched by turns.

Since the weather was so favourable, and the whole party, even Robert, were in perfect health, and altogether the journey had commenced under such favourable auspices, it was deemed advisable to push forward as quickly as possible. Accordingly, the next day they marched 35 miles more, and encamped at nightfall on the banks of Rio Biobio. The country still presented the same fertile aspect, and abounded in flowers, but animals of any sort only came in sight occasionally, and there were no birds visible, except a solitary heron or owl, and a thrush or grebe, flying from the falcon. Human beings there were none, not a native appeared; not even one of the *guassos*, the degenerate offspring of Indians and Spaniards, dashed across the plain like a shadow, his flying steed dripping with blood from the cruel thrusts inflicted by the gigantic spurs of his master's naked feet. It was absolutely impossible to make inquiries when there was no one to address, and Lord Glenarvan came to the conclusion that Captain Grant must have been dragged right over the Andes into the Pampas, and that it would be useless to search for him elsewhere. The only thing to be done was to wait patiently and press forward with all the speed in their power.

On the 17th they set out in the usual line of march, a line which it was hard work for Robert to keep, his ardour constantly compelling him to get ahead of the *madrina*, to the great despair of his mule. Nothing

but a sharp recall from Glenarvan kept the boy in proper order.

The country now became more diversified, and the rising ground indicated their approach to a mountainous district. Rivers were more numerous, and came rushing noisily down the slopes. Paganel consulted his maps, and when he found any of those streams not marked, which often happened, all the fire of a geographer burnt in his veins, and he would exclaim, with a charming air of vexation,

"A river which hasn't a name is like having no civil standing. It has no existence in the eye of geographical law."

He christened them forthwith, without the least hesitation, and marked them down on the map, qualifying them with the most high-sounding adjectives he could find in the Spanish language.

"What a language!" he said. "How full and sonorous it is! It is like the metal church bells are made of—composed of seventy-eight parts of copper and twenty-two of tin."

"But, I say, do you make any progress in it?" asked Glenarvan.

"Most certainly, my dear Lord. Ah, if it wasn't the accent, that wretched accent!"

And for want of better work, Paganel whiled away the time along the road by practising the difficulties in pronunciation, repeating all the break-jaw words he could, though still making geographical observations. Any question about the country that Glenarvan might

ask the *catapez* was sure to be answered by the learned Frenchman before he could reply, to the great astonishment of the guide, who gazed at him in bewilderment.

About two o'clock that same day they came to a cross road, and naturally enough Glenarvan inquired the name of it.

"It is the route from Yumbel to Los Angeleo," said Paganel.

Glenarvan looked at the *catapez,* who replied,

"Quite right."

And then, turning towards the geographer, he added. "You have travelled in these parts before, sir?"

"Oh yes," said Paganel, quite gravely.

"On a mule?"

"No, in an easy chair."

The *catapez* could not make him out, but shrugged his shoulders, and resumed his post at the head of the party.

At five in the evening they stopped in a gorge of no great depth, some miles above the little town of Loja, and encamped for the night at the foot of the Sierras, the first steppes of the great Cordilleras.

CHAPTER XII.

TWELVE THOUSAND FEET HIGH IN THE AIR.

NOTHING of importance had occurred hitherto in the passage through Chili; but all the obstacles and difficulties incident to a mountain journey were about to crowd on the travellers now.

One important question had first to be settled. Which pass would take them over the Andes, and yet not be out of their fixed route?

On questioning the *catapez* on the subject, he replied—

"There are only two practicable passes that I know of in this part of the Cordilleras."

"The pass of Arica is one undoubtedly discovered by Valdivia Mendoza," said Paganel.

"Just so."

"And that of Villarica is the other."

"Precisely."

"Well, my good fellow, both these passes have only one fault: they take us too far out of our route, either north or south."

"Have you no other to propose?" asked the Major.

"Certainly," replied Paganel. "There is the pass of Antuco, on the slope of the volcano, in latitude 37° 30′, or, in other words, only half a degree out of our way."

"That would do, but are you acquainted with this pass of Antuco, *catapez?*" said Glenarvan.

"Yes, your Lordship, I have been through it, but I did not mention it, as no one goes that way but the Indian shepherds with their herds of cattle."

"Oh, very well; if mares and sheep and oxen can go that way, we can, so let's start at once."

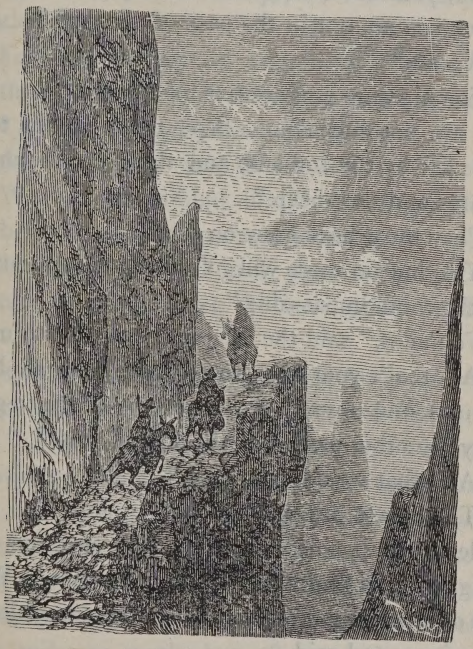
The signal for departure was given immediately, and they struck into the heart of the valley of Las Lejas, between great masses of chalk crystal. They went on by an almost imperceptible ascent until they came to a little lake, which formed a natural reservoir and meeting-place of all the picturesque *rios* of the district. Above the lake lay widespreading *llanos*, plains covered with different grasses. This is the pasture-ground of the Indian flocks. Beyond this there was a deep morass, stretching north and south; but they managed to keep clear of it, thanks to the sagacity of the mules. The ruins of Fort Ballenare next came in sight on the top of a perpendicular rock. The road had now become hard and strong, and the pebbles loosened by the hoofs of the mules rattled noisily down the mountain at every step, like cascades of stone. About three p.m. they came to the ruins of another fort, which had been destroyed in the insurrection of 1770.

From this point the pass began to be difficult, and even dangerous. The angle of the declivities widened and the ledges narrowed, and frightful precipices met their gaze. The mules went cautiously along, keeping their heads near the ground, as if scenting the track. They marched in file. Sometimes, at a sudden bend of the road, the *madrina* would disappear, and the little caravan had to guide themselves by the distant tinkle of her bell. Often some capricious winding would bring the column in two parallel lines, and the *catapez* could speak to his *peons* across a crevasse not two fathoms wide, though two hundred deep, which made between them an inseparable gulf. Herbaceous vegetation still struggled against the encroachments of the stones, but it was apparent that the mineral and vegetable kingdoms had commenced a contest for the mastery.

In the vicinity of the volcano of Antuco, streaks of lava of a reddish colour covered the ground, bristling with yellow needle-shaped crystals. The rocks lay piled one upon another, ready to topple over at any moment, and keeping their place in defiance of all the laws of equilibrium. It was evident that a region like this might easily be so altered by any cataclysm, that its entire appearance would be changed. In such circumstances, it was not easy to find the track, and the *catapez* often hesitated, and stopped and looked about him, examining the form of the rocks, and searching on the pebble stones for any traces of the Indians.

Glenarvan followed his guide step by step. He

saw that his perlexity was increasing as the way became more difficult, but did not dare to interrogate him, rightly enough perhaps, thinking that both mules and muleteers were very much governed by instinct, and it was best to trust to them.



For about an hour longer the *catapez* kept wandering about almost at haphazard, though always getting higher up the mountain. At last he was odliged to stop short They were in a narrow valley, one of those gorges called by the Indians " quebrads," and on

reaching the end, a wall of porphyry rose perpendicularly before them, and barred further passage. The *catapez*, after vain attempts at finding an opening, dismounted, crossed his arms, and waited. Glenarvan went up to him and asked if he had lost his way.

"No, your Lordship," was the reply.

"But you are not in the pass of Antuco."

"We are."

"You are sure you are not mistaken?"

"I am not mistaken. See! there are the remains of a fire left by the Indians, and there are the marks of the mares and the sheep."

"They must have gone on then."

"Yes, but no more will go; the last earthquake has made the route impassable."

"To mules," said the Major, "but not to men."

"Ah, that's your concern; I have done all I could. My mules and myself are at your service to go back and try the other passes of the Cordilleras."

"And that would delay us?"

"Three days at least."

Glenarvan listened silently. He saw the *catapez* was right. His mules could not go further. When he talked of returning, however, Glenarvan appealed to his companions, and said—

"Will you go on in spite of all the difficulty?"

"We will follow your Lordship," replied Tom Austin.

"And even precede you," added Paganel. "What is it, after all? We have only to cross the top of the

mountain chain, and once over, nothing can be easier of descent than the slopes we shall find there. When we get below, we shall find *baqueanos,* Argentine shepherds, who will guide us through the Pampas, and swift horses accustomed to gallop over the plains. Let's go forward then, I say, and without a moment's hesitation."

"Forward!" they all exclaimed. "You will not go with us, then?" said Glenarvan to the *catapez.*

"I am the muleteer," was the reply.

"As you please," said Glenarvan.

"We can do without him," said Paganel. "On the other side we shall get back into the road to Antuco, and I'm quite sure I'll lead you to the foot of the mountain as straight as the best guide in the Cordilleras."

Accordingly, Glenarvan settled accounts with the *catapez,* and bade farewell to him and his *peons,* and mules. The arms and instruments, and a small stock of provisions, were divided among the seven travellers, and it was unanimously agreed that the ascent should recommence at once, and, if necessary, should continue part of the night. There was a very steep winding path on the left, which the mules never have attempted. It was toilsome work, but after two hours' exertion, and much round-about climbing, the little party found themselves once more in the pass of Antuco.

They were not far now from the highest peak of the Cordilleras, but there was not the slightest trace of any beaten path. The entire region had been over-

turned by recent shocks of earthquake, and all they could do was to keep on climbing higher and higher. Paganel was rather disconcerted at finding no way out to the other side of the chain, and laid his account with having to undergo great fatigue before the topmost peaks of the Andes could be reached, for their mean height is between eleven and twelve thousand six hundred feet. Fortunately the weather was calm and the sky clear, in addition to the season being favourable, but in winter, from May to October, such an ascent would have been impracticable. The intense cold quickly kills travellers, and those who even manage to hold out against it, fall victims to the violence of the *temporales,* a sort of hurricane peculiar to those regions, which yearly fills the abysses of the Cordilleras with dead bodies.

They went out toiling steadily upwards all night, hoisting themselves up to almost inaccessible plateaux, and leaping over broad, deep crevasses. They had no ropes, but arms linked in arms supplied the lack, and shoulders served for ladders. The strength of Mulrady and the dexterity of Wilson, were taxed heavily now. These two brave Scots multiplied themselves, so to speak. Many a time, but for their devotion and courage, the small band could not have gone on. Glenarvan never lost sight of young Robert, for his age and vivacity made him imprudent. Paganel was a true Frenchman in his impetuous ardour, and hurried furiously along. The Major, on the contrary, only went as quick as was necessary, neither more nor less,

climbing without the least apparent exertion. Perhaps he hardly knew, indeed, that he was climbing at all, or perhaps he fancied he was descending.

At five o'clock in the morning the adventurous men found by barometrical observations that they had attained the height of 7,500 feet. They were on the secondary plateaux, the last boundaries of the arborescent region. They saw animals gambolling there which would have been the joy and the fortune of hunters. The agile creatures knew this well, for they fled at the approach of human beings. Among them was the llama, that mountain treasure which forms a substitute for the sheep, and the ox, and the horse, and lives where not even a mule could exist. The chinchilla was there too, a small rodent animal of gentle, timid nature, rich in furry covering, and holding a middle place between the hare and the jerboa, with hind paws like those of a kangaroo. Nothing could be more charming than the light, graceful little creatures skipping about the tops of the trees like a squirrel.

"It is not a bird," said Paganel, "but it is certainly not a quadruped."

These animals, however, were not the last inhabitants of the mountain. At 9,000 feet, on the verge of eternal snows, they found herds of ruminating animals of incomparable beauty: alpacas, with long silky hair, and a species of goat without horns, elegant and stately in appearance, with fine, soft wool, called by naturalists the vicuna. But any attempt to approach them was useless; they would hardly allow themselves to be seen.

They dart away almost as swiftly as birds on the wing, gliding noiselessly over the white dazzling snow.

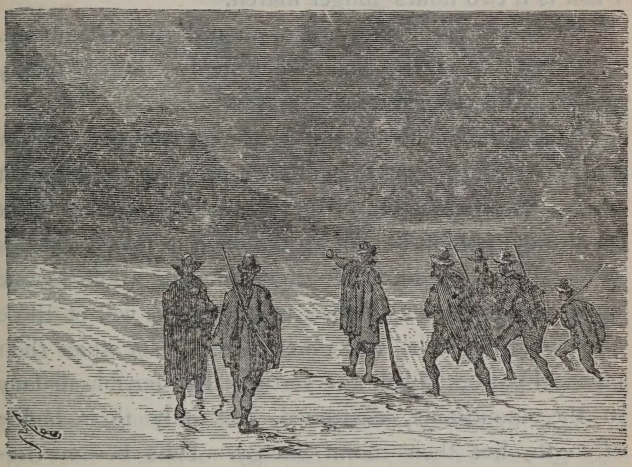
The whole aspect of the region had now completely changed. Huge blocks of glittering ice of a bluish tint on some of the declivities stood up on all sides, reflecting the early light of morn. The ascent became very perilous. They were obliged to reconnoitre carefully before making a single step, on account of the crevasses. Wilson took the lead, and tried the ground with his feet. His companions followed exactly in his footprints, lowering their voices to a whisper, as the least sound would disturb the currents of air, and might cause the fall of the masses of snow suspended in the air seven or eight hundred feet above their heads.

They had come now to the region of shrubs and bushes, which, higher still, gave place to grasses and cacti. At 11,000 feet all trace of vegetation had disappeared. They had only stopped once, to rest and snatch a hurried meal, to recruit their strength. With superhuman courage the ascent was then resumed, amidst increasing dangers and difficulties. They were forced to bestride sharp peaks, and leap over chasms so deep, that they did not dare to look down them. In many places wooden crosses marked the scene of some great catastrophes.

About two o'clock, they came to an immense barren plain without a sign of vegetation. The air was dry, and the sky unclouded blue; at this elevation rain is unknown, and vapours only condense into snow or hail. Here and there peaks of porphyry or basalt pierced

through the white winding-sheet like the bones of a skeleton; and at intervals fragments of quartz or gneiss, loosened by the action of the air, fell down with a faint, dull sound, which, in a denser atmosphere would have been almost imperceptible.

However, in spite of their courage, the strength of the little band was giving way. Glenarvan regretted they



had gone so far into the interior of the mountain, when he saw how exhausted his men had become. Young Robert held out manfully, but he could not go much farther.

At three o'clock, Glenarvan stopped and said—

"We must rest."

He knew if he did not himself propose it, no one else would.

"Rest?" rejoined Paganel. "We have no place of shelter."

"It is absolutely necessary, however, if it were only for Robert."

"No, no," said the courageous lad, "I can still walk; don't stop."

"You shall be carried, my boy, but we must get to the other side of the Cordilleras, cost what it may. There we may perhaps find some hut to cover us. All I ask is a two hours' longer march."

"Are you all of the same opinion?" said Glenarvan.

"Yes," was the unanimous reply; and Mulrady added, "I'll carry the boy."

The march eastward was forthwith resumed. They had a frightful height to climb yet to gain the topmost peaks. The rarefaction of the atmosphere produced that painful oppression known by the name of *puna*. Drops of blood stood on gums and lips, and respiration became hurried and difficult. However strong the will of these brave men might be, the time came at last when their physical powers failed, and vertigo, that terrible malady in the mountains, destroyed not only their bodily strength, but their moral energy. Falls became frequent, and those who fell could not rise again, but dragged themselves along on their knees.

But just as exhaustion was about to make short work of any further ascent, and Glenarvan's heart began to sink as he thought of the snow lying far as the eye could reach, and of the intense cold, and saw the shadows of night fast overspreading the desolate peaks, and knew they had not a roof to shelter them, suddenly the Major stopped and said, in a calm voice, "A hut!"

CHAPTER XIII.

DESCENT OF THE CORDILLERAS.

ANYONE else but McNabbs might have passed the hut a hundred times, and gone all round it, and even over it, without suspecting its existence. It was covered with snow, and scarcely distinguishable from the surrounding rocks; but Wilson and Mulrady succeeded in digging it out and clearing the opening after half an hour's hard work, to the great joy of the whole party, who eagerly took possession of it.

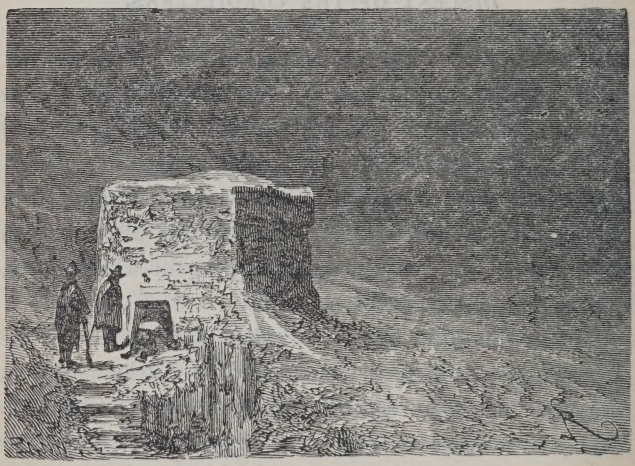
They found it was a *casucha,* constructed by the Indians, made of *adobes,* a species of bricks baked in the sun. Its form was that of a cube, 12 feet on each side, and it stood on a block of basalt. A stone stair led up to the door, the only opening; and narrow as this door was, the hurricane, and snow, and hail found their way in when the *temporales* were unchained in the mountains.

Ten people could easily find room in it, and though the walls might be none too water-tight in the rainy season, at this time of the year, at any rate, it was a sufficient protection against the intense cold, which,

according to the thermometer, was ten degrees below zero. Besides, there was a sort of fireplace in it, with a chimney of bricks, badly enough put together, certainly, but still it allowed of a fire being lighted.

"This will shelter us, at any rate," said Glenarvan, "even if it is not very comfortable. Providence has led us to it, and we can only be thankful."

"Why, it is a perfect palace, I call it," said Paganel;



we only want flunkeys and courtiers. We shall do capitally here."

"Especially when there is a good fire blazing on the hearth, for we are quite as cold as we are hungry. For my part, I would rather see a good faggot just now than a slice of venison."

"Well, Tom, we'll try and get some combustible or other," said Paganel.

"Combustibles on the top of the Cordilleras!" exclaimed Mulrady, in a dubious tone.

"Since there is a chimney in the *casucha*," said the Major, "the probability is that we shall find something to burn in it."

"Our friend McNabbs is right," said Glenarvan. "Get everything in readiness for supper, and I'll go out and turn woodcutter."

"Wilson and I will go with you," said Paganel.

"Do you want me?" asked Robert, getting up.

"No, my brave boy, rest yourself. You'll be a man, when others are only children at your age," replied Glenarvan.

It was about six in the evening when Lord Edward and his two companions left the *casucha*. In spite of the perfect calmness of the atmosphere, the cold was stinging. Paganel consulted his barometer, and found that the depression of the mercury corresponded to an elevation of 11,000 feet, only 910 metres lower than Mont Blanc. But if these mountains had presented the difficulties of the giant of the Swiss Alps, not one of the travellers could have crossed the great chain of the New World.

On reaching a little mound of porphyry, Glenarvan and Paganel stopped to gaze about them and scan the horizon on all sides. They were now on the summit of the Nevados of the Cordilleras, and could see over an area of forty miles. The valley of the Colorado was already sunk in shadow, and night was fast drawing her mantle over the eastern slopes of the Andes. The

western side was illumined by the rays of the setting sun, and peaks and glaciers flashed back his golden beams with dazzling radiance. On the south the view was magnificent. Across the wild valley of the Torbido, about two miles distant, rose the volcano of Antuco. The mountain roared like some enormous monster, and vomited red smoke, mingled with torrents of sooty flame. The surrounding peaks appeared on fire. Showers of red-hot stones, clouds of reddish vapour and rockets of lava, all combined, presented the appearance of glowing, sparkling streams. The splendour of the spectacle increased every instant as night deepened, and the whole sky became lighted up with the dazzling reflection of the blazing crater, while the sun, gradually becoming shorn of his sunset glories, disappeared like a star lost in the distant darkness of the horizon.

Paganel and Glenarvan would have remained long enough gazing at the sublime struggle between the fires of earth and heaven, if the more practical Wilson had not reminded them of the business on hand. There was no wood to be found, however, but fortunately the rocks were covered with a poor, dry species of lichen. Of this they made an ample provision, as well as of a plant called *llaretta*, the root of which burns tolerably well. This precious combustible was carried back to the *casucha* and heaped up on the hearth. It was a difficult matter to kindle it, though, and still more to keep it alight. The air was so rarefied that there was scarcely oxygen enough in it to support combustion. At least, this was the reason assigned by the Major.

"By way of compensation, however," he added, "water will boil at less than 100° heat. It will come to the point of ebullition before 90°."

McNabbs was right, as the thermometer proved, for it was plunged into the kettle when the water boiled, and the mercury only rose to 90°. Coffee was soon ready, and eagerly gulped down by everybody. The dry meat certainly seemed poor fare, and Paganel couldn't help saying—

"I tell you what, some grilled llama wouldn't be bad with this, would it? They say that the llama is substitute for the ox and the sheep, and I should like to know if it is, in an alimentary respect."

"What!" replied the Major. "You're not content with your supper, most learned Paganel."

"Enchanted with it, my brave Major; still I must confess I should not say no to a dish of llama."

"You are a Sybarite."

"I plead guilty to the charge. But come, now, though you call me that, you wouldn't sulk at a beefsteak yourself, would you?"

"Probably not."

"And if you were asked to lie in wait for a llama, notwithstanding the cold and the darkness, you would do it without the least hesitation?"

"Of course; and if it will give you the slightest pleasure——"

His companions had hardly time to thank him for his obliging good-nature, when distant and prolonged howls broke on their ear, plainly not proceeding from

one or two solitary animals, but from a whole troop, and one, moreover, that was rapidly approaching. Providence had sent them a supper as well as led them to a hut. This was the geographer's conclusion; but Glenarvan damped his joy somewhat, by remarking that the quadrupeds of the Cordilleras are never met with in such a high latitude.

"Then where can these animals come from?" asked Tom Austin. "Don't you hear them getting nearer?"

"An avalanche," suggested Mulrady.

"Impossible!" returned Paganel. "That is regular howling."

"Let's go out and see," said Glenarvan.

"Yes, and be ready for hunting," replied McNabbs, arming himself with his carbine.

They all rushed forthwith out of the *casucha*. Night had completely set in, dark and starry. The moon, now in her last quarter, had not yet risen. The peaks on the north and east had disappeared from view, and nothing was visible save the fantastic *silhouette* of some towering rocks here and there. The howls, and clearly the howls of terrified animals, were redoubled. They proceeded from that part of the Cordilleras which lay in darkness. What could be going on there? Suddenly a furious avalanche came down, an avalanche of living animals mad with fear. The whole plateau seemed to tremble. There were hundreds, perhaps thousands, of these animals, and in spite of the rarefied atmosphere, their noise was deafening. Were they wild beasts from the Pampas, or herds of llamas and vicunas? Glenar-

van, McNabbs, Robert, Austin, and the two sailors, had just time to throw themselves flat on the ground, before they swept past like a whirlwind only a few paces distant. Paganel, who had remained standing, to take advantage of his peculiar powers of sight, was knocked down in a twinkling. At the same moment the report of fire-arms was heard. The Major had fired, and it seemed to him that an animal had fallen close by, and that the whole herd, yelling louder than ever, had rushed down and disappeared among the declivities lighted up by the reflection of the volcano.

"Ah, I've got them," said a voice, the voice of Paganel.

"Got what?" asked Glenarvan.

"My spectacles," was the reply. "One might expect to lose that much, in such a tumult as this."

"You are not wounded, I hope?"

"No, only knocked down, but by what?"

"By this," replied the Major, holding up the animal he had killed.

They all hastened eagerly into the hut to examine McNabbs' prize by the light of the fire.

It was a pretty creature, like a small camel without a hump. The head was small and the body flattened, the legs were long and slender; the skin fine, and the hair the colour of *café au lait*.

Paganel had scarcely looked at it before he exclaimed, "A guanaco!"

"What sort of an animal is that?" asked Glenarvan.

"One you can eat."

"And it is good, savoury meat, I assure you; a dish of Olympus! I knew we should have fresh meat for supper, and such meat! But who is going to cut up the beast?"

"I will," said Wilson.

"Well, I'll undertake to cook it," said Paganel.

"Can you cook, then, Monsieur Paganel?" asked Robert.

"I should think so, my boy. I'm a Frenchman, and in every Frenchman there is a cook."

Five minutes afterwards Paganel began to grill large slices of venison on the embers made by the use of the *llarettas*, and in about ten minutes a dish was ready, which he served up to his companions by the tempting name of guanaco cutlets. No one stood on ceremony, but fell to with a hearty good will.

To the absolute stupefaction of the geographer, however, the first mouthful was greeted with a general grimace, and such exclamations as "Tough!" "It is horrible." "It is not eatable."

The poor *savant* was obliged to own that his cutlets could not be relished even by hungry men. They began to banter him about his "Olympian dish," and indulge in jokes at his expense, which he understood quite well; but all he cared about was to find out how it happened that the flesh of the guanaco, which was certainly good and eatable food, had turned out so badly in his hands. At last light broke in on him, and he called out—

"I see through it now! Yes, I see through it. I have found out the secret now."

"The meat was too long kept, was it?" asked McNabbs, quietly.

"No, but the meat had walked too much. How could I have forgotten that?"

"What do you mean?" asked Tom Austin.

"I mean this; the guanaco is only good for eating when it is killed in a state of rest. If it has been long hunted and gone over much ground before it is captured, it is no longer eatable. I can affirm the fact by the mere taste, that this animal has come a great distance, and consequently the whole herd has."

"You are certain of this?" asked Glenarvan.

"Absolutely certain."

"But what could have frightened the creatures so, and driven them from their haunts, when they ought to have been quietly sleeping?"

"That's a question, my dear Glenarvan, I could not possibly answer. Take my advice, and let us go to sleep without troubling our heads about it. I say, Major, shall we go to sleep?"

"Yes, we'll go to sleep, Paganel."

Each one, thereupon, wrapped himself up in his poncho, and the fire was made up for the night.

Loud snores in every tune and key soon resounded from all sides of the hut, the deep bass contribution of Paganel completing the harmony.

But Glenarvan could not sleep. Secret uneasiness kept him in a continual state of wakefulness. His

thoughts reverted involuntarily to those frightened animals flying in one common direction, impelled by one common terror. They could not be pursued by wild beasts, for at such an elevation there were almost none to be met with, and of hunters still fewer. What terror then could have driven them among the precipices of the Andes? Glenarvan felt a presentiment of approaching danger.

But gradually he fell into a half-drowsy state, and his apprehensions were lulled. Hope took the place of fear. He saw himself on the morrow on the plains of the Andes, where the search would actually commence, and perhaps success was close at hand. He thought of Captain Grant and his two sailors, and their deliverance from cruel bondage. As these visions passed rapidly through his mind, every now and then he was roused by the crackling of the fire, or sparks flying out, or some little jet of flame would suddenly flare up and illumine the faces of his slumbering companions.

Then his presentiments returned in greater strength than before, and he listened anxiously to the sounds outside the hut.

At certain intervals he fancied he could hear rumbling noises in the distance, dull and threatening like the mutterings of thunder before a storm. There surely must be a storm raging down below at the foot of the mountains. He got up and went out to see.

The moon was rising. The atmosphere was pure and calm. Not a cloud visible either above or below.

Here and there was a passing reflection from the flames of Antuco, but neither storm nor lightning, and myriads of bright stars studded the zenith. Still the rumbling noises continued. They seemed to meet together and cross the chain of the Andes. Glenarvan returned to the *casucha* more uneasy than ever, questioning within himself as to the connection between these sounds and the flight of the guanacos. He looked at his watch and found the time was about two in the morning. As he had no certainty, however, of any immediate danger, he did not wake his companions, who were sleeping soundly after their fatigue, and after a little dozed off himself, and slumbered heavily for some hours.

All of a sudden a violent crash made him start to his feet. A deafening noise fell on his ear like the roar of artillery. He felt the ground giving way beneath him, and the *casucha* rocked to and fro, and opened.

He shouted to his companions, but they were already awake, and tumbling pell-mell over each other. They were being rapidly dragged down a steep declivity. Day dawned and revealed a terrible scene. The form of the mountains changed in an instant. Cones were cut of. Tottering peaks disappeared as if some trap had opened at their base. Owing to a peculiar phenomenon of the Cordilleras, an enormous mass, many miles in extent, had been displaced entirely, and was speeding down towards the plain.

"An earthquake!" exclaimed Paganel. He was not mistaken. It was one of those cataclysms frequent in Chili, and in this very region where Copiapo had

been twice destroyed, and Santiago four times laid in ruins in fourteen years. This region of the globe is so underlaid with volcanic fires, and the volcanoes of recent origin are such insufficient safety valves for the subterranean vapours, that shocks are of frequent occurrence, and are called by the people *tremblores.*

The plateau to which the seven men were clinging holding on by tufts of lichen, and giddy and terrified in

the extreme, was rushing down the declivity with the swiftness of an express, at the rate of fifty miles an hour. Not a cry was possible, nor an attempt to get off or stop. They could not even have heard themselves speak. The internal rumblings, the crash of the avalanches, the fall of masses of granite and basalt, and the whirlwind of pulverized snow, made all communication impossible. Sometimes they went perfectly

smoothly along without jolts or jerks, and sometimes on the contrary, the plateau would reel and roll like a ship in a storm, coasting past abysses, in which fragments of the mountain were falling, tearing up trees by the roots, and levelling, as if with the keen edge of an immense scythe, every projection of the declivity.

How long this indescribable descent would last, no one could calculate, nor what it would end in ultimately. None of the party knew whether the rest were still alive, whether one or another were not already lying in the depth of some abyss. Almost breathless with the swift motion, frozen with the cold air, which pierced them through, and blinded with the whirling snow, they gasped for breath, and became exhausted and nearly inanimate, only retaining their hold of the rocks by a powerful instinct of self-preservation. Suddenly a tremendous shock pitched them right off, and sent them rolling to the very foot of the mountain. The plateau had stopped.

For some minutes no one stirred. At last one of the party picked himself up, and stood on his feet, stunned by the shock, but still firm on his legs. This was the Major. He shook off the blinding snow, and looked round him. His companions lay in a close circle like the shots from a gun that has just been discharged, piled one on the top of another.

The Major counted them. All where there except one—that one was Robert Grant.

CHAPTER XIV.

A PROVIDENTIAL GUNSHOT.

THE eastern side of the Cordilleras of the Andes consists of a succession of lengthened declivities, which slope down almost insensibly to the plain. The soil is carpeted with rich herbage, and adorned with magnificent trees, among which, in great numbers, were apple-trees, planted at the time of the conquest, and golden with fruit. There were, literally, perfect forests of these. This district was, in fact, just a corner of fertile Normandy.

The sudden transition from a desert to an oasis, from snowy peaks to verdant plains, from winter to summer, cannot fail to strike the traveller's eye.

The ground, moreover, had recovered its immobility. The trembling had ceased, though there was little doubt the forces below the surface were carrying on their devastating work further on, for shocks of earthquake are always occurring in some part or other of the Andes. This time the shock had been one of extreme violence. The outline of the mountains was wholly altered, and the Pampas guides would have sought vainly for the accustomed landmarks.

A magnificent day had dawned. The sun was just rising from his ocean-bed, and his bright rays streamed already over the Argentine plains, and ran across to the Atlantic. It was about eight o'clock.

Lord Glenarvan and his companions were gradually restored to animation by the Major's efforts. They had been completely stunned, but had sustained no injury whatever. The descent of the Cordilleras was accomplished; and as Dame Nature had conveyed them at her own expense, they could only have praised her method of locomotion if one of their number, and that one the feeblest and youngest, the child of the party, had not been missing at the roll call.

The brave boy was beloved by everybody. Paganel was particularly attached to him, and so was the Major, with all his apparent coldness. As for Glenarvan, he was in absolute despair when he heard of his disappearance, and pictured to himself the child lying in some deep abyss, wildly crying for succour.

"We must go and look for him, and look till we find him," he exclaimed, almost unable to keep back his tears. "We cannot leave him to his fate. Every valley and precipice and abyss must be searched through and through. I will have a rope fastened round my waist, and go down myself. I insist upon it, you understand; I insist upon it. Heaven grant Robert may be still alive! If we lose the boy, how could we ever dare to meet the father? What right have we to save the captain at the cost of his son's life?"

Glenarvan's companions heard him in silence. He

sought to read hope in their eyes, but they did not venture to meet his gaze.

At last he said:

"Well, you hear what I say, but you make no response. Do you mean to tell me you have no hope—not the slightest?"

Again there was silence, till McNabbs asked,

"Which of you can recollect where Robert disappeared?"

No one could say.

"Well, then," resumed the Major, "you know this at any rate, who was the child beside during our descent of the Cordilleras?"

"Beside me," replied Wilson.

"Very well; up to what moment did you see him beside you? Try if you can remember?"

"All that I can recollect is that Robert Grant was still by my side, holding fast by a tuft of lichen less than two minutes before the shock which finished our descent."

"Less than two minutes? Mind what you are saying; I daresay a minute seemed a very long time to you. Are you sure you are not making a mistake?"

"I don't think I am. No; it was just about two minutes, as I tell you."

"Very well, then; and was Robert on your right or left?"

"On my left. I remember that his poncho brushed past my face."

"And with regard to us, how were you placed?"

"On the left also."

"Then Robert must have disappeared on this side," said the Major, turning towards the mountain and pointing towards the right; "and I should judge," he added, "considering the time that has elapsed, that the spot where he fell is about two miles up. Between that height and the ground is where we must search, dividing the different zones among us, and it is there we shall find him."

Not another word was spoken. The six men commenced their explorations, keeping constantly to the line they had made in their descent, examining closely every fissure, and going into the very depths of the abysses, choked up though they partly were with fragments of the plateau; and more than one came out again with garments torn to rags, and feet and hands bleeding. For many long hours those brave fellows continued their search without dreaming of taking rest. But all in vain. The child had not only met his death on the mountain, but found a grave which some enormous rock had sealed for ever.

About one o'clock, Glenarvan and his companions met again in the valley. Glenarvan was completely crushed with grief. He scarcely spoke. The only words that escaped his lips amidst his sighs were—

"I shall not go away! I shall not go away!"

No one of the party but could enter into his feeling, and respect it.

"Let us wait," said Paganel to the Major and Tom Austin. "We will take a little rest, and recruit our

strength. We need it any way, either to prolong our search or continue our route."

"Yes; and, as Edward wishes it, we will rest. He has still hope, but what is it he hopes?"

"Who knows!" said Tom Austin.

"Poor Robert!" replied Paganel, brushing away a tear.

The valley was thickly wooded, and the Major had no difficulty in finding a suitable place of encampment. He chose a clump of tall carob-trees, under which they arranged their few belongings—few indeed, for all they had were sundry wraps and fire-arms, and a little dried meat and rice. Not far off there was a *rio*, which supplied them with water, though it was still somewhat muddy after the disturbance of the avalanche. Mulrady soon had a fire lighted on the grass, and a warm refreshing beverage to offer his master. But Glenarvan refused to touch it, and lay stretched on his poncho in a state of absolute prostration.

So the day passed, and night came on, calm and peaceful as the preceding had been. While his companions were lying motionless, though wide awake, Glenarvan betook himself once more to the slopes of the Cordilleras, listening intently in hope that some cry for help would fall upon his ear. He ventured far up in spite of his being alone, straining his ear with painful eagerness to catch the faintest sound, and calling aloud in an agony of despair.

But he heard nothing save the beatings of his own heart, though he wandered all night on the mountain.

Sometimes the Major followed him, and sometimes Paganel, ready to lend a helping hand among the slippery peaks and dangerous precipices among which he was dragged by his rash and useless imprudence. All his efforts were in vain, however, and to his repeated cries of "Robert, Robert!" echo was the only response.

Day dawned, and it now became a matter of necessity to go and bring back the poor lord from the distant plateau, even against his will. His despair was terrible. Who could dare to speak of quitting this fatal valley? Yet provisions were done, and Argentine guides and horses were not far off to lead them to the Pampas. To go back would be more difficult than to go forward. Besides, the Atlantic Ocean was the appointed meeting place with the *Duncan*. These were strong reasons against any long delay; indeed it was best for all parties to continue the route as soon as possible.

McNabbs undertook the task of rousing Lord Glenarvan from his grief. For a long time his cousin seemed not to hear him. At last he shook his head, and said, almost inaudibly—

"Did you say we must start?"

"Yes, we must start."

"Wait one hour longer."

"Yes, we'll wait another hour," replied the worthy Major.

The hour slipped away, and again Glenarvan begged for longer grace. To hear his imploring tones, one might have thought him a criminal begging a respite. So the day passed on till it was almost noon. McNabbs

hesitated now no longer, but, acting on the advice of the rest, told his cousin that start they must, for all their lives depended on prompt action.

"Yes, yes!" replied Glenarvan. "Let us start, let us start!"

But he spoke without looking at McNabbs. His gaze was fixed intently on a certain dark speck in the heavens. Suddenly he exclaimed, extending his arm, and keeping it motionless, as if petrified.

"There! there! Look! look!"

All eyes turned immediately in the direction indicated so imperiously. The dark speck was increasing visibly. It was evidently some bird hovering above them.

"A condor," said Paganel.

"Yes, a condor!" replied Glenarvan. "Who knows? He is coming down—he is getting lower! Let us wait!"

Paganel was not mistaken, it was assuredly a condor. This magnificent bird is the king of the Southern Andes, and was formerly worshipped by the Incas. It attains an extraordinary development in those regions. Its strength is prodigious. It has frequently driven oxen over the edge of precipices down into the depths of abysses. It seizes sheep, and kids, and young calves browsingon the plains, and carries them off to inaccessible heights. It hovers in the air far beyond the utmost limits of human sight, and its powers of vision are so great that it can discern the smallest objects on the earth beneath.

What had this condor discovered then? Could it

be the corpse of Robert Grant? "Who knows?" repeated Glenarvan, keeping his eye immovably fixed on the bird. The enormous creature was fast approaching, sometimes hovering for awhile with outspread wings, and sometimes falling with the swiftness of inert bodies

in space. Presently he began to wheel round in wide circles. They could see him distinctly. He measured more than fifteen feet, and his powerful wings bore him along with scarcely the slightest effort, for it is the prerogative of large birds to fly with calm majesty,

while insects have to beat their wings a thousand times a second.

The Major and Wilson had seized their carbines, but Glenarvan stopped them by a gesture. The condor was encircling in his flight a sort of inaccessible plateau about a quarter of a mile up the side of the mountain. He wheeled round and round with dazzling rapidity, opening and shutting his formidable claws, and shaking his cartilaginous caruncle, or comb.

"It is there, there!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

A sudden thought flashed across his mind, and with a terrible cry, he called out, "Fire! fire! Oh, suppose Robert were still alive! That bird."

But it was too late. The condor had dropped out of sight behind the crags. Only a second passed, a second that seemed an age, and the enormous bird reappeared, carrying a heavy load and flying at a slow rate.

A cry of horror rose on all sides. It was a human body the condor had in his claws, dangling in the air, and apparently lifeless—it was Robert Grant. The bird had seized him by his clothes, and had him hanging already at least 150 feet high in the air. He had caught sight of the travellers, and was flapping his wings violently, endeavouring to escape with his heavy prey.

"Oh! would that Robert were dashed to pieces against the rocks, rather than be a ——"

He did not finish his sentence, but seizing Wilson's carbine, took aim at the condor. His arm was too trembling, however, to keep the weapon steady.

"Let me do it," said the Major. And with a calm

eye, and sure hands and motionless body, he aimed at the bird, now 300 feet above him in the air.

But before he had pulled the trigger the report of a gun resounded from the bottom of the valley. A white smoke rose from between two masses of basalt, and the condor, shot in the head, gradually turned over and began to fall, supported by his great wings spread out like a parachute. He had not let go his prey, but

gently sank down with it on the ground, about ten paces from the stream.

"We've got him, we've got him," shouted Glenarvan; and without waiting to see where the shot so providentially came from, he rushed towards the condor, followed by his companions.

When they reached the spot the bird was dead, and

the body of Robert was quite concealed beneath his mighty wings. Glenarvan flung himself on the corpse, and dragging it from the condor's grasp, placed it flat on the grass, and knelt down and put his ear to the heart

But a wilder cry of joy never broke from human lips, than Glenarvan uttered next moment, as he started to his feet and exclaimed—

"He is alive! He is still alive!"

The boy's clothes were stripped off in an instant, and his face bathed with cold water. He moved slightly, opened his eyes, looked round and murmured,

"Oh, my Lord! It is you!" he said; "my father!"

Glenarvan could not reply. He was speechless with emotion, and kneeling down by the side of the child so miraculously saved, burst into tears.

CHAPTER XV.

JACQUES PAGANEL'S SPANISH.

ROBERT had no sooner escaped one terrible danger than he ran the risk of another scarcely less formidable. He was almost torn to pieces by his friends, for the brave fellows were so overjoyed at the sight of him, that in spite of his weak state, none of them would be satisfied without giving him a hug. However, it seemed as if good rough hugging did not hurt sick people; at any rate it did not hurt Robert, but quite the contrary.

But the first joy of deliverance over, the next thought was who was the deliverer? Of course it was the Major who suggested looking for him, and he was not far off, for about fifty paces from the *rio* a man of very tall stature was seen standing motionless on the lowest crags at the foot of the mountain. A long gun was lying at his feet. He had broad shoulders, and long hair bound together with leather thongs. He was over six feet in height. His bronzed face was red between the eyes and mouth, black between the lower eyelids, and white on the forehead. He wore the costume of the Patagonians on the frontiers, consisting of a splen-

did cloak, ornamented with scarlet arabesques, made of the skins of a guanaco, sewed together with ostrich tendons, and with the silky wool turned up on the edge. Under this mantle was a garment of foxskin, fastened round the waist, and coming down to a point in front. A little bag hung from his belt, containing colours for painting his face. His boots were pieces of ox hide, fastened round the ancles by straps across.

This Patagonian had a splendid face, indicating real intelligence, notwithstanding the medley of colours by which it was disfigured. His waiting attitude was full of dignity; indeed, to see him standing grave and motionless on his pedestal of rocks, one might have taken him for a statue of *sang-froid.*

As soon as the Major perceived him, he pointed him out to Glenarvan, who ran towards him immediately. The Patagonian came two steps forward to meet him, and Glenarvan caught hold of his hand and pressed it in his own. It was impossible to mistake the meaning of the action, for the noble face of the Scotch lord so beamed with gratitude that no words were needed. The stranger bowed slightly in return, and said a few words that neither Glenarvan nor the Major could understand.

The Patagonian surveyed them attentively for a few minutes, and spoke again in another language. But this second idiom was no more intelligible than the first. Certain words, however, caught Glenarvan's ear as sounding like Spanish, a few sentences of which he could speak.

"*Español?*" he asked.

The Patagonian nodded in reply, a movement of the head which has an affirmative signification among all nations.

"That's good!" said the Major. "Our friend Paganel will be the very man for him. It is lucky for us that he took it into his head to learn Spanish."

Paganel was called forthwith. He came at once, and saluted the stranger with all the grace of a Frenchman. But his compliments were lost on the Patagonian, for he did not understand a single syllable.

However, on being told how things stood, he began in Spanish, and opening his mouth as wide as he could, the better to articulate, said,

"*Vos sois um homem de bem*" (You are a brave man).

The native listened, but made no reply.

"He doesn't understand," said the geographer.

"Perhaps you haven't the right accent," suggested the Major.

"That's just it! Confound the accent!"

Once more Paganel repeated his compliment, but with no better success.

"I'll change the phrase," he said; and in slow, deliberate tones he went on, "*Sem duvida um Patagão*" (A Patagonian, undoubtedly).

No response still.

"*Dizeime!*" said Paganel (Answer me).

But no answer came.

"*Vos compriendeis?*" (Do you understand?)

shouted Paganel, at the very top of his voice, as if he would burst his throat.

Evidently the Indian did not understand, for he replied in Spanish,

"*No comprendo*" (I do not understand).

It was Paganel's turn now to be amazed. He pushed his spectacles right down over his nose, as if greatly irritated, and said,

"I'll be hanged if I can make out one word of this infernal patois. It is Araucanian, that's certain!"

"Not a bit of it!" said Glenarvan. "It was Spanish he spoke."

And addressing the Patagonian, he repeated the word, "*Español?*" (Spanish?)

"*Si, si*" (yes, yes), replied the Indian.

Paganel's surprise became absolute stupefaction. The Major and his cousin exchanged sly glances, and McNabbs said, mischievously, with a look of fun on his face, "Ah, ah, my worthy friend; is this another of your misadventures? You seem to have quite a monopoly of them."

"What!" said Paganel, pricking up his ear.

"Yes, it's clear enough the man speaks Spanish."

"He!"

"Yes, he certainly speaks Spanish. Perhaps it is some other language you have been studying all this time instead of——"

But Paganel would not allow him to proceed. He shrugged his shoulders, and said, stiffly,

"You go a little too far, Major."

"Well, how is it that you don't understand him, then?"

"Why, of course, because the man speaks badly," replied the learned geographer, getting impatient.

"He speaks badly; that's to say, because you can't understand him," returns the Major, coolly.

"Come, come, McNabbs," put in Glenarvan, "your supposition is quite inadmissible. However *distrait* our friend Paganel is, it is hardly likely he would study one language for another."

"Well, Edward—or rather you, my good Paganel—explain it then."

"I explain nothing. I give proof. Here is the book I use daily, to practise myself in the difficulties of the Spanish language. Examine it for yourself, Major," he said, handing him a volume in very ragged condition, which he had brought up, after a long rummage, from the depths of one of his numerous pockets. "Now you can see whether I am imposing on you," he continued, indignantly.

"And what's the name of this book?" asked the Major, as he took it from his hand.

"The *Lusiades*, an admirable epic, which——"

"The *Lusiades!*" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Yes, my friend, the *Lusiades* of the great Camoens, neither more nor less."

"Camoens!" repeated Glenarvan; "but, Paganel, my unfortunate fellow, Camoens was a Portuguese! It is Portuguese you have been learning for the last six weeks!"

"Camoens! *Lusiades!* Portuguese!" Paganel could not say more. He looked vexed, while his companions, who had all gathered round, broke out in a furious burst of laughter.

The Indian never moved a muscle of his face. He quietly awaited the explanation of this incomprehensible mirth.

"Fool, idiot, that I am!" at last uttered Paganel. "Is it really a fact? You are not joking with me? It is what I have actually been doing? Why, it is a second confusion of tongues, like Babel. Ah me! alack-a-day! my friends, what is to become of me? To start for India, and arrive at Chili! To learn Spanish, and talk Portuguese! Why, if I go on like this, some day I shall be throwing myself out of window instead of my cigar!"

To hear Paganel bemoan his misadventures and see his comical discomfiture, would have upset any one's gravity. Besides, he set the example himself, and said—

"Laugh away, my friends, laugh as loud as you like; you can't laugh at me half as much as I laugh at myself!"

"But, I say," said the Major, after a minute, "this doesn't alter the fact that we have no interpreter."

"Oh, don't distress yourself about that," replied Paganel, "Portuguese and Spanish are so much alike that I made a mistake; but this very resemblance will be a great help towards rectifying it. In a very short time I shall be able to thank the Patagonian in the language he speaks so well."

Paganel was right. He soon managed to exchange a few words with the stranger, and found out even that his name was Thalcave, a word which signified in Araucanian, "The Thunderer." This surname had, no doubt, come from his skill in handling fire-arms.

But what rejoiced Glenarvan most was to learn that he was a guide by occupation, and, moreover, a guide across the Pampas. To his mind the meeting with him

was so providential, that he could not doubt now of the success of their enterprise. The deliverance of Captain Grant seemed an accomplished fact.

When the party went back to Robert, the boy held out his arms to the Patagonian, who silently laid his hand on his head, and proceeded to examine him with the greatest care, gently feeling each of his aching

limbs. Then he went down to the *rio,* and gathered a few handfuls of wild celery, which grew on the banks, with which he rubbed the child's body all over. He handled him with the most exquisite delicacy, and his treatment so revived the lad's strength, that it was soon evident that a few hours' rest would set him all right.

It was accordingly decided that they should encamp for the rest of the day and the ensuing night. Two grave questions, moreover, had to be settled: where to get food, and means of transport. Provisions and mules were both lacking. Happily, they had Thalcave, however, a practised guide, and one of the most intelligent of his class. He undertook to find all that was needed, and offered to take him to a *tolderia* of Indians, not further than four miles off at most, where he could get supplies of all he wanted. This proposition was partly made by gestures, and partly by a few Spanish words which Paganel managed to make out. His offer was accepted, and Glenarvan and his learned friend started off with him at once.

They walked at a good pace for an hour and a half, and had to make great strides to keep up with the giant Thalcave. The road lay through a beautiful fertile region, abounding in rich pasturages, where a hundred thousand cattle might have fed comfortably. Large ponds, connected by an inextricable labyrinth of *rios,* amply watered these plains and produced their greenness. Swans with black heads were disporting in the water, disputing possession with the numerous intruders which gambolled over the *llanos.* The feathered tribes were

of most brilliant plumage, and of marvellous variety and deafening noise. The isacus, a graceful sort of dove with grey feathers streaked with white, and the yellow cardinals, were flitting about in the trees like moving flowers; while overhead pigeons, sparrows, chingolos, bulgueros, and mongitas were flying swiftly along, rending the air with their piercing cries.

Paganel's admiration increased with every step, and he had nearly exhausted his vocabulary of adjectives by his loud exclamations, to the astonishment of the Patagonian, to whom the birds, and the swans, and the prairies were every day things. The learned geographer was so lost in delight, that he seemed hardly to have started before they came in sight of the Indian camp, or *tolderia,* situated in the heart of a valley.

About thirty nomadic Indians were living there in rude cabins made of branches, pasturing immense herds of milk cows, sheep, oxen, and horses. They went from one prairie to another, always finding a well-spread table for their four-footed guests.

These nomads were a hybrid type of Araucans, Pehuenches, and Aucas. They were Ando-Peruvians, of an olive tint, of medium stature and massive form, with a low forehead, almost circular face, thin lips, high cheek-bones, effeminate features, and cold expression. As a whole they are about the least interesting of the Indians. However, it was their herds Glenarvan wanted, not themselves. As long as he could get beef and horses, he cared for nothing else.

Thalcave did the bargaining. It did not take long. In exchange for seven ready saddled horses of the Argentine breed, 100 lbs. of *charqui*, or dried meat, several measures of rice, and leather bottles for water, the Indians agreed to take twenty ounces of gold as they could not get wine or rum, which they would have preferred, though they were perfectly acquainted with the value of gold. Glenarvan wished to purchase an eighth horse for the Patagonian, but he gave him to understand it would be useless.

They got back to the camp in less than half an hour, and were hailed with acclamations by the whole party, or rather the provisions and horses were. They were all hungry, and ate heartily of the welcome viands. Robert took a little food with the rest. He was fast recovering strength. The close of the day was spent

in complete repose and pleasant talk about the dear absent ones.

Paganel never quitted the Indian's side. It was not that he was so glad to see a real Patagonian, by whom he looked a perfect pigmy—a Patagonian who might have almost have rivalled the Emperor Maximii and that Congo negro seen by the learned Van der Brock, both eight feet high; but he caught up Spanish phrases from the Indian and studied the language without a book this time, gesticulating at a great rate all the grand sonorous words that fell on his ear.

"If I don't catch the accent," he said to the Major, "it won't be my fault, but who would have said to me that it was a Patagonian who would teach me Spanish one day?"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RIO COLORADO.

NEXT day, the 22nd of October, at eight o'clock in the morning, Thalcave gave the signal for departure. Between the 22nd and 42nd degrees the Argentine soil slopes eastward, and all the travellers had to do was to follow the slope right down to the sea.

Glenarvan had supposed Thalcave's refusal of a horse was that he preferred walking, as some guides do, but he was mistaken, for just as they were ready, the Patagonian gave a peculiar whistle, and immediately a magnificent steed of the pure Argentine breed came bounding out of a grove close by, at his master's call. Both in form and colour the animal was of perfect beauty. The Major, who was a thorough judge of all the good points of a horse, was loud in admiration of this sample of the Pampas breed, and considered that, in many respects, he greatly resembled an English hunter. This splendid creature was called "Thaouka," a word in Patagonian which means bird, and he well deserved the name.

Thalcave was a consummate horseman, and to see

him on his prancing steed was a sight worth looking at. The saddle was adapted to the two hunting weapons in common use on the Argentine plain—the *bolas* and the *lazo.* The *bolas* consists of three balls fastened together by a strap of leather, attached to the front of the *recado.* The Indians fling them often at the distance of a hundred feet from the animal or enemy of which they are in pursuit, and with such precision that they catch round their legs and throw them down in an instant. It is a formidable weapon in their hands, and one they handle with surprising skill. The *lazo* is always retained in the hand. It is simply a rope, thirty feet long, made of tightly-twisted leather, with a slip knot at the end, which passes through an iron ring. This noose is thrown by the right hand, while the left keeps fast hold of the rope, the other end of which is fastened to the saddle. A long carbine in the shoulder belt completed the accoutrements of the Patagonian.

He took his place at the head of the party, quite unconscious of the admiration he was exciting, and they set off, going alternately at a gallop and walking pace, for the "trot" seemed altogether unknown to them. Robert proved to be a bold rider, and completely reassured Glenarvan as to his ability to keep his seat.

The Pampas commenced at the very foot of the Cordilleras. They may be divided into three parts. The first extends from the chain of the Andes, and stretches over an extent of 250 miles covered with stunted trees and bushes; the second 450 miles is

clothed with magnificent herbage, and stops about 180 miles from Buenos Ayres; from this point to the sea, the foot of the traveller treads over immense prairies of lucerne and thistles, which constitute the third division of the Pampas.

On issuing from the gorges of the Cordilleras, Glenarvan and his band came first to plains of sand,

called *medanos,* lying in ridges like waves of the sea, and so extremely fine that the least breath of wind agitated the light particles, and sent them flying in clouds, which rose and fell like water-spouts. It was a spectacle which caused both pleasure and pain, for nothing could be more curious than to see the said water-spouts wandering over the plain, coming in contact and mingling with each other, and falling and

rising in wild confusion; but, on the other hand, nothing could be more disagreeable than the dust which was thrown off by these innumerable *medanos,* which was so impalpable that close one's eyes as they might, it found its way through the lids.

This phenomenon lasted the greater part of the day. The travellers made good progress however, and about four o'clock the Cordilleras lay full forty miles behind them, the dark outlines being already almost lost in the evening mists. They were all somewhat fatigued with the journey, and glad enough to halt for the night on the banks of the Neuquem, called Ramid, or Comoe by certain geographers, a troubled, turbulent rapid flowing between high red banks.

No incident of any importance occurred during that night or the following day. They rode well and fast, finding the ground firm, and the temperature bearable. Towards noon, however, the sun's rays were extremely scorching, and when evening came, a bar of clouds streaked the south-west horizon, a sure sign of a change in the weather. The Patagonian pointed it out to the geographer, who replied:

"Yes, I know;" and, turning to his companions, added, "see, a change of weather is coming! We are going to have a taste of *Pampero.*"

And he went on to explain that this *Pampero* is very common in the Argentine plains. It is an extremely dry wind which blows from the south-west. Thalcave was not mistaken, for the *Pampero* blew violently all night, and was sufficiently trying to poor fellows only

sheltered by their ponchos. The horses lay down on the ground, and the men stretched themselves beside them in a close group. Glenarvan was afraid they would be delayed by the continuance of the hurricane, but Paganel was able to reassure him on that score, after consulting his barometer.

"The *Pampero* generally brings a tempest which lasts three days, and may be always foretold by the depression of the mercury," he said. "But when the barometer rises, on the contrary, which is the case now, all we need expect is a few violent blasts. So you can make your mind easy, my good friend; by sunrise the sky will be quite clear again."

"You talk like a book, Paganel," replied Glenarvan.

"And I am one; and, what's more, you are welcome to turn over my leaves whenever you like."

The book was right. At one o'clock the wind suddenly lulled, and the weary men fell asleep and woke at daybreak refreshed and invigorated.

It was the 20th of October, and the tenth day since they had left Talcahuano. They were still ninety miles from the point where the Rio Colorado crosses the thirty-seventh parallel, that is to say, about two days' journey. Glenarvan kept a sharp look-out for the appearance of any Indians, intending to question them, through Thalcave, about Captain Grant, as Paganel could not speak to him well enough for this. But the track they were following was one little frequented by the natives, for the ordinary routes across the Pampas

lie further north. If by chance some nomadic horseman came in sight far away, he was off again like a dart, not caring to enter into communication with strangers. To a solitary individual, a little troop of eight men, all well mounted and well armed, wore a suspicious aspect, so that any intercourse either with honest men or even banditti, was almost impossible.

Glenarvan was regretting this exceedingly, when he unexpectedly met with a singular justification of his rendering of the eventful document.

In pursuing the course the travellers had laid down for themselves, they had several times crossed the routes over the plains in common use, but had struck into none of them. Hitherto Thalcave had made no remark about this. He understood quite well, however, that they were not bound for any particular town, or village, or settlement. Every morning they set out in a straight line towards the rising sun, and went on without the least deviation. Moreover it must have struck Thalcave that instead of being the guide he was guided; yet, with true Indian reserve, he maintained absolute silence. But on reaching a particular point, he checked his horse suddenly, and said to Paganel—

"The Carmen route."

"Yes, my good Patagonian," replied Paganel in his best Spanish; "the route from Carmen to Mendoza."

"We are not going to take it?"

"No," replied Paganel.

"Where are we going then?"

"Always to the east."

"That's going nowhere."

"Who knows?"

Thalcave was silent, and gazed at the geographer with an air of profound surprise. He had no suspicion that Paganel was joking, for an Indian is always grave.

"You are not going to Carmen, then?" he added, after a moment's pause.

"No."

"Nor to Mendoza?"

"No, nor to Mendoza."

Just then Glenarvan came up to ask the reason of the stoppage, and what he and Thalcave were discussing.

"He wanted to know whether we were going to Carmen or Mendoza, and was very much surprised at my negative reply to both questions."

"Well, certainly, it must seem strange to him."

"I think so. He says we are going nowhere."

"Well, Paganel, I wonder if it is possible to make him understand the object of our expedition, and what our motive is for always going east."

"That would be a difficult matter, for an Indian knows nothing about degrees, and the finding of the document would appear to him a mere fantastic story."

"Is it the story he would not understand, or the story-teller?" said McNabbs, quietly.

"Ah, McNabbs, I see you have small faith in my Spanish yet."

"Well, try it, my good friend."

"So I will."

And turning round to the Patagonian he began his narrative, breaking down frequently for the want of a word, and the difficulty of making certain details intelligible to a half-civilized Indian. It was quite a sight to see the learned geographer. He gesticulated and articulated, and so worked himself up over it, that the big drops of sweat fell in a cascade down his forehead on to his chest. When his tongue failed, his arms were called to aid. Paganel got down on the ground and traced a geographical map on the sand, showing where the lines of latitude and longitude cross and where the two oceans were, along which the Carmen route led. Thalcave looked on composedly, without giving any indication of either comprehending or not comprehending.

The lesson had lasted half an hour, when the geographer left off, wiped his streaming face, and waited for the Patagonian to speak.

"Does he understand?" said Glenarvan.

"That remains to be seen; but if he doesn't, I give it up," replied Paganel.

Thalcave neither stirred nor spoke. His eyes remained fixed on the lines drawn on the sand, now becoming fast effaced by the wind.

"Well?" said Paganel to him at length.

The Patagonian seemed not to hear. Paganel fancied he could detect an ironical smile already on the lips of the Major, and determined to carry the day, was about to recommence his geographical illustrations, when the Indian stopped him by a gesture, and said—

"You are in search of a prisoner?"

"Yes," replied Paganel.

"And just on this line between the setting and the rising sun?" added Thalcave, speaking in Indian fashion of the route from west to east.

"Yes, yes, that's it."

"And it's your God," continued the guide, "that has sent you the secret of this prisoner on the waves."

"God Himself."

"His will be accomplished then," replied the native almost solemnly. "We will march east, and if it needs be, to the sun."

Paganel, triumphing in his pupil, immediately translated his replies to his companions, and exclaimed—

"What an intelligent race! All my explanations would have been lost on nineteen in every twenty of the peasants in my own country!"

Glenarvan requested him to ask the Patagonian if he had heard of any foreigners who had fallen into the hands of the Indians of the Pampas.

Paganel did so, and waited an answer.

"Perhaps I have."

The reply was no sooner translated than the Patagonian found himself surrounded by the seven men questioning him with eager glances. Paganel was so excited, he could hardly find words, and he gazed at the grave Indian as if he could read the reply on his lips.

Each word spoken by Thalcave was instantly translated, so that the whole party seemed to hear him speak in their mother tongue.

"And what about the prisoner?" asked Pagane.

"He was a foreigner."

"You have seen him?"

"No; but I have heard the Indian speak of him. He is brave; he has the heart of a bull."

"The heart of a bull!" said Paganel. "Ah, this magnificent Patagonian language. You understand him, my friends, he means a courageous man."

"My father!" exclaimed Robert Grant, and, turning to Paganel, he asked what the Spanish was for, "It is my father."

"*Es mio padre,*" replied the geographer.

Immediately taking Thalcave's hands in his own, the boy said, in a soft tone—

"*Es mio padre.*"

"*Suo padre,*" replied the Patagonian, his face lighting up.

He took the child in his arms, lifted him up on his horse, and gazed at him with peculiar sympathy. His intelligent face was full of quiet feeling.

But Paganel had not completed his interrogations. "This prisoner, who was he? What was he doing? When had Thalcave heard of him?" All these questions poured upon him at once.

He had not long to wait for an answer, and learnt that the European was a slave in one of the tribes that roamed the country between the Colorado and the Rio Negro.

"But where was the last place he was in?"

"With the Cacque Calfoucoura."

"In the line we have been following?"

"Yes."

"And who is this Cacque?"

"The chief of the Poyuches Indians, a man with two tongues and two hearts."

"That's to say false in speech and false in action," said Paganel, after he had translated this beautiful figure of the Patagonian language. "And can we deliver our friend?" he added.

"You may if he is still in the hands of the Indians."

"And when did you last hear of him?"

"A long while ago; the sun has brought two summers since then to the Pampas."

The joy of Glenarvan cannot be described. This reply agreed perfectly with the date of the document. But one question still remained for him to put to Thalcave.

"You spoke of a prisoner," he said; "but were there not three?"

"I don't know," said Thalcave.

"And you know nothing of his present situation?"

"Nothing."

This ended the conversation. It was quite possible that the three men had become separated long ago; but still this much was certain, that the Indians had spoken of a European that was in their power; and the date of the captivity, and even the descriptive phrase about the captive, evidently pointed to Harry Grant.

The next day, the 25th of October, the travellers resumed their journey with fresh ardour. The plain they traversed was dull and monotonous, being one of those called *travesias* by the natives. The ground was a dead evel, and so clayey that not a stone or pebble was to be

seen, except in certain barren parched ravines, or on the margin of the artificial ponds dug out by the Indians. At long intervals low forests of black tree tops appeared, out of which white carob-trees peeped out here and there. Then they came to groves of turpentine-trees and *chanares* (wild broom), and a miserable prickly sort of tree, all that could grow in such unproductive soil.

The 26th was a fatiguing day. They wished to reach Rio Colorado, and spurred on their horses with such effect that that same evening they found themselves on the banks of that beautiful river. Its Indian name, the *Cobu Leubu,* signifies "great river." After a long course it falls into the Atlantic. Curiously enough, as it approaches the sea, its body of water diminishes either by imbibition or evaporation, and the cause of this is not yet determined.

On arriving at Colorado, Paganel's first care was to bathe himself, in his geographical capacity. The waters were coloured by a reddish clay, and he was surprised to find them so deep. This was owing to the snow melted by the summer sun. But it was wide as well as deep—too wide, indeed, for the horses to ford. Happily a short way up they discovered a bridge of hurdles fastened by straps of leather, and suspended in Indian fashion. Over this the little troop went safely, and encamped on the left bank.

Paganel would not go to sleep till he had taken the exact bearings of the Colorado, and pricked it carefully out on his chart. This was instead of the Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou, which still waited for him in the mountains of Thibet.

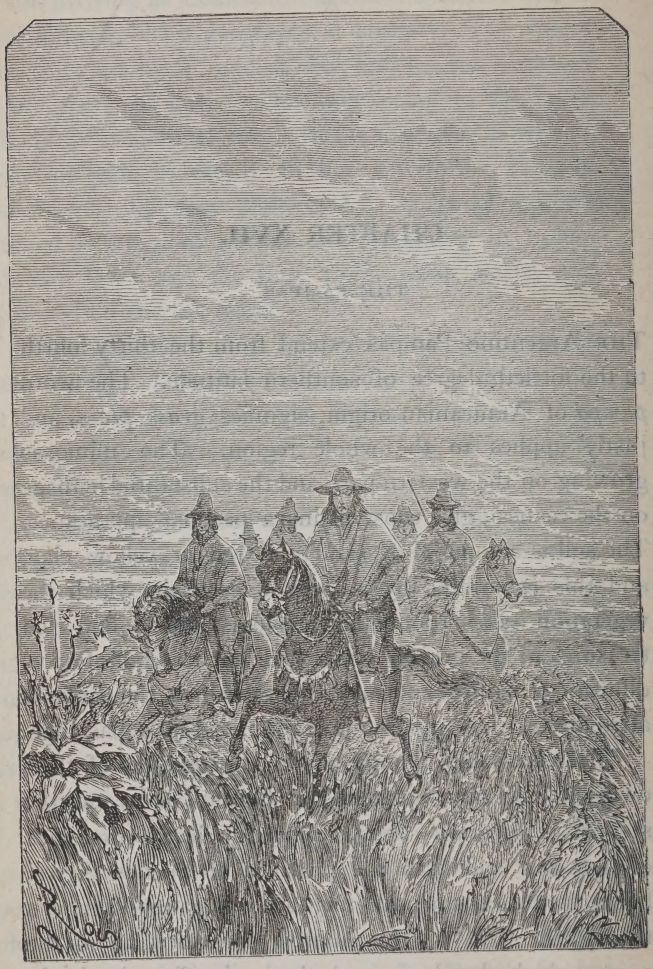
No incident occurred during the two following days; the same monotony and sterility marked the landscape. Nothing could be more uninteresting. The soil was becoming very damp, however, and in some places almost under water; and they frequently passed by lagoons thickly loaded with aquatic plants. In the evening they stopped on the edge of a lake, the water of which was mineral. It was called L'Ure Lanquem, "the bitter lake," by the Indians, and in 1862 witnessed many a cruel deed of vengeance done by the Argentine troops. Here they encamped in the usual manner, and would have passed a good night but for the monkeys, and marmosets, and wild dogs. These noisy animals performed a natural symphony, no doubt, in honour of the Europeans, but certainly anything but an agreeable serenade to their ears.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PAMPAS.

THE Argentine Pampas extend from the thirty-fourth to the fortieth degree of southern latitude. The word *pampa* of Araucanian origin, signifies *grass plain*, and justly applies to the whole region. The mimosas growing on the western part, and the substantial herbage on the eastern, give those plains a peculiar appearance. The soil is composed of sand and red or yellow clay, and this is covered by a layer of earth, in which the vegetation takes root. The geologist would find rich treasures in the tertiary strata here, for it is full of antediluvian remains—enormous bones, which the Indians attribute to some gigantic race that lived in a past age.

The American Pampas have a geography of their own, like the savannahs of the Great Lakes and the steppes of Siberia. They are more subject to extremes of heat and cold than the province of Buenos Ayres, being more continental, for, according to Paganel's theory, the heat of the summer is stored up in the ocean, which absorbs it, and throws it off again slowly in the winter. Consequently the temperature of islands



is more uniform than the interior of continents. In autumn—that is between April and May—rain falls in torrents; but just now the weather was very dry, and the temperature extremely high.

They set out at daybreak, after carefully verifying the route. Thanks to the shrubs and bushes which held fast the soil, the ground was quite firm, and they were neither troubled by *medanos* nor flying sand.

The horses went on at a good pace through the thick *paja-brava*, the grass of the Pampas, *par excellence*, so high and thick that the Indians find shelter in it from storms. At certain distances, but increasingly seldom, there were wet, marshy spots, almost entirely under water, where the willows grew, and a plant called the *Gygnerium argenteum*. Here the horses drank their fill greedily, as if bent on quenching their thirst for past, present, and future. Thalcave went first to beat the bushes and frighten away the cholinas, a most dangerous species of viper, the bite of which kills an ox in less than an hour.

The travellers kept steadily on without difficulty or delay. Nothing could be more monotonous than the landscape. Only such a genius as Paganel, who could find wonders where common eyes saw nothing, could take an interest in such a route. He would remark the slightest variety in the shrubs, and glean some instruction for Robert his willing pupil, even out of a blade of grass.

All through the day, the 29th of October, the plain unfolded the same dreary uniformity as they proceeded. About two o'clock they came to a long tract of country

strewn with the bones of an immense herd of cattle, lying in blanched heaps. These bones were not in a winding line, as if one by one the animals had sunk down and died on the march, and no one could explain how such a collection of skeletons could be in such a comparatively limited space. Even Paganel was nonplussed, and had to interrogate Thalcave, who was at no loss for an answer.

An exclamation of "Impossible!" from the geographer, and a very decided gesture in the affirmative from the guide, were not much help towards the solution of the mystery, and the impatient listeners begged to know what he had said was the cause.

"Fire from Heaven!" replied Paganel.

"What! thunder cause a disaster like that?" said Tom Austin. "A herd of five hundred cattle laid dead on the ground!"

"Thalcave says so, and he can't be mistaken. Besides, I believe the storms in the Pampas are noted for their fury. I only hope we may not experience one some of these days."

"It is very hot," said Wilson.

"The thermometer must register 30° in the shade," returned Paganel.

"That does not surprise me," said Glenarvan. "I feel electricity in the air. It runs through me. It is to be hoped this temperature may not last."

"Oh, oh!" rejoined Paganel; "you need not look for any change when there is not even a speck of mist in the horizon."

"So much the worse," returned Glenarvan, "for our horses are sensibly affected by the heat. Do you feel it, my boy?" he added turning to Robert.

"No, my Lord, I like it; I think it is a very good thing."

"Especially in winter," remarked the Major, judiciously, puffing out a great cloud of tobacco smoke.

Towards night they came to a halt near a deserted

rancho made of branches, plastered over with mud and thatched with stubble. Adjoining the cabin was a little enclosure fenced round with stakes, which were half rotten certainly, but still would form a sufficient protection for the horses against the attacks of the foxes. Not that they had anything to fear personally from the little animals, but the crafty creatures

might gnaw the halters, and the horses seize the chance to make their escape.

A few steps from the *rancho* there was a circular hole, which had evidently served for cooking purposes, and contained burnt-out cinders. In the interior of the hut was a truckle bed made of ox hide, a soup pot, a spit, and a *maté* kettle. *Maté* is a drink much used in South America. It is the tea of the Indians, and consists of an infusion of leaves dried over a fire. They sip it through a straw, like other American beverages. At Paganel's request Thalcave brewed a few cups of this *maté*, which were pronounced first-rate, and made a pleasant addition to the usual repast.

The next day, the 30th of October, the sun rose in a fiery mist, and poured down his most scorching rays. The heat of the day bade fair to be excessive, and there would be no shelter on the prairie.

Still they manfully set out on the journey, always keeping east. Frequently they came to immense herds lying completely prostrate with the heat, unable even to feed. Their guardians, or shepherds, were nowhere visible. Trained dogs were the only watchers, over this agglomeration of cows, and bulls, and oxen. Happily the cattle on the Pampas are not at all fierce, and quite free from the dread of red, which characterizes their European brethren.

"Ah! that's because they eat republican grass," said Paganel, delighted at his own joke.

Towards the middle of the day some slight change appeared in the aspect of the plain, which did not escape

the notice of the travellers, wearied as they were with the unvarying monotony. Graminaceous plants became fewer. They gave place to wretched looking burdocks, and gigantic thistles, nine feet high, which would have been a paradise for all the donkeys in the land. Stunted *chanares* and other prickly shrubs, plants which grow in dry districts, appeared here and there. Hitherto a certain humidity in the clay of the soil had supported vegetation, and the grassy carpet which covered the prairie was thick and luxurious; but now in parts it was worn away, and in many places torn up altogether, displaying the poverty of the ground beneath. These unmistakable signs of increasing dryness were pointed out by Thalcave.

"I am not sorry for the change," said Tom Austin. "Grass, grass always, sickens one at length."

"Yes, but always grass, always water," returned the Major.

"Oh, we are not short of that," said Wilson, "and we are safe to find some river on our route."

If Paganel had heard him he would have been sure to say that rivers were rare between the Colorado and the Sierras of the Argentine province, but just then he was explaining something or other to Glenarvan.

For some time the atmosphere had seemed impregnated with the smell of smoke. However, no fire was visible on the horizon, and no smoke betrayed a distant conflagration. It was difficult, therefore, to account for it. But soon the smell became so strong that all the party were amazed except Paganel and Thalcave.

Paganel, who was seldom at a loss for a reason, said—

"We do not see the fire, but we smell the smoke. Now, you know, no smoke, no fire, and the proverb holds just as good in America as in Europe. Fire there is then somewhere. Only the Pampas being so flat, the currents of air are unhindered in their passage, and the smell of burning grass may be detected at a distance of seventy-five miles."

"Seventy-five miles!" said the Major, incredulously.

"Quite that distance," affirmed Paganel; "but, let me add, these conflagrations spread at a great rate, and often sweep over a large extent of pasturage."

"Who sets fire to the prairies?" asked Robert.

"Sometimes the thunder when the grass is parched up by the heat, and sometimes it is done by the Indians."

"And what for?"

"Well, they say, but how far they are right, I do not know, that after a conflagration the graminæ grow better. If so, it must be a means of invigorating the soil by mixing it with ashes. My own opinion is, however, that they do it to destroy the millions of ixodes—a sort of parasitic insect—which is particularly troublesome to cattle."

"But such an energetic proceeding must cost the lives of some of the poor animals wandering over the prairie," said the Major.

"Yes, they get burnt; but among so many a few are no great loss."

"I do not care about them: that is their business; but suppose travellers are crossing the Pampas, might not they be caught in the flames?"

"What then?" replied Paganel, with an air of visible satisfaction. "It does happen so sometimes, and, as far as I am concerned, I should be very glad to be present at such a spectacle."

"That is our *savant* all over. He is willing to be burnt alive for the sake of science," said Glenarvan.

"Not I, my dear Glenarvan, don't mistake yourself; but we have all read Cooper's stories, and know how to put the fire out by tearing up the grass by the roots in a given radius. Nothing is more simple, so instead of dreading a prairie fire, I wish it would come, with all my heart."

But Paganel's desire was not gratified, and though he was half-roasted certainly, it was solely by the heat of the sun's rays, which beat down with insupportable vehemence. The horses panted for breath, unable to bear so tropical a temperature. There was no shade to be hoped for unless some passing cloud visited for a brief space his flaming disc. But this happened but seldom, and at best was a transient relief, for though they spurred on their steeds and tried to keep beneath the friendly cover, they were soon outdistanced by the cloud, and found the sun beating on them again with unabated power.

Wilson had said they were sure of water, but he was not prepared for the devouring thirst which tortured his companions during this trying day, and he reckoned

"without his host," where he made sure of finding a river on the route. There were not only no *rios*, but even the ponds dug out by the Indians were dried up. As the drought seemed to increase with every mile, Paganel asked Thalcave when he expected to come to water.

"At Lake Salinas," replied the Indian.

"And when shall we get there?"

"To-morrow evening."

When the Argentines travel in the Pampas they generally dig wells, and find water a few feet below the surface. But the travellers could not fall back on this resource, not having the necessary implements. They were therefore obliged to husband the small provision of water they had still left, and deal it out in rations, so that if no one had enough to satisfy his thirst no one felt it too painful.

They halted at evening after a course of thirty miles, and eagerly looked forward to a good night's rest to compensate for the fatigue of the day. But their slumbers were invaded by a swarm of mosquitoes, which allowed them no peace. Their presence indicated a change of wind which shifted to the north. A south or south-west wind generally puts to flight these little pests.

Even these petty ills of life could not ruffle the Major's equanimity; but Paganel, on the contrary, was perfectly exasperated by such trifling annoyances. He abused the poor mosquitoes desperately, and deplored the lack of some acid lotion which would have eased

the pain of their stings. The Major did his best to console him by reminding him of the fact that they had only to do with one species of insect, among the 300,000 naturalists reckon. He would listen to nothing, and got up in a very bad temper.

He was quite willing to start at daybreak, however, for they had to get to Lake Salinas before sundown. The horses were tired out and dying for water, and though their riders had stinted themselves for their sakes, still their ration was very insufficient. The drought was constantly increasing, and the heat none the less for the wind being north, this wind being the simoom of the Pampas.

There was a brief interruption this day to the monotony of the journey. Mulrady, who was in front of the others, rode hastily back to report the approach of a troop of Indians. The news was received with very different feelings by Glenarvan and Thalcave. The Englishman was glad of the chance of gleaning some information about his shipwrecked countryman, while the Patagonian hardly cared to encounter the nomadic Indians of the prairie, knowing their bandit propensities. He rather sought to avoid them, and gave orders to his party to have their arms in readiness.

Presently the nomads came in sight, and the Patagonian was reassured at finding they were only ten in number. They came within a hundred yards of them, and stopped. This was near enough to observe them distinctly. They were fine specimens of the native races, which had been almost entirely swept away in

1833 by General Rosas; tall in stature, with arched forehead and olive complexion. They were dressed in guanaco skins, and carried lances twenty feet long knives, slings, bolas, and lazos, and, by their dexterity in the management of their horses, showed themselves to be accomplished riders.

They appeared to have stopped for the purpose of holding a council with each other, for they shouted and gesticulated at a great rate. Glenarvan determined to go up to them; but he had no sooner moved forward than the whole band wheeled round, and disappeared with incredible speed. It would have been useless for the travellers to attempt to overtake them with such worn-out horses.

"The cowards!" exclaimed Paganel.

"They scampered off too quick for honest folks," said McNabbs.

"Who are these Indians, Thalcave?" asked Paganel.

"Gauchos."

"The Gauchos!" cried Paganel; and, turning to his companions, he added, "we need not have been so much on our guard; there was nothing to fear."

"How is that?" asked McNabbs.

"Because the Gauchos are inoffensive peasants."

"You believe that, Paganel?"

"Certainly I do. They took us for robbers, and fled in terror."

"I rather think they did not dare to attack us," replied Glenarvan, much vexed at not being able to

enter into communication with those Indians, whatever they were.

"That's my opinion too," said the Major, "for, if I am not mistaken, instead of being harmless, the Gauchos are formidable out-and-out bandits."

"The idea!" exclaimed Paganel.

And forthwith commenced a lively discussion of this ethnological thesis—so lively that the Major became

excited, and, quite contrary to his usual suavity, said bluntly—

"I believe you are wrong, Paganel."

"Wrong?" replied Paganel.

"Yes. Thalcave himself took them for robbers, and he knows what he is talking about."

"Well, Thalcave was mistaken this time," retorted Paganel, somewhat sharply. "The Gauchos are agri-

culturists and shepherds, and nothing else, as I have stated in a pamphlet on the natives of the Pampas, written by me, which has attracted some notice."

"Well, well, you have committed an error, that's all, Monsieur Paganel."

"What, Monsieur McNabbs! you tell me I have committed an error?"

"An inadvertence, if you like, which you can put among the *errata* in the next edition."

Paganel, highly incensed at his geographical knowledge being brought in question, and even jested about, allowed his ill-humour to get the better of him, and said—

"Know, sir, that my books have no need of such *errata*."

"Indeed! Well, on this occasion they have, at any rate," retorted McNabbs, quite as obstinate as his opponent.

"Sir, I think you are very annoying to day."

"And I think you are very crabbed."

Glenarvan thought it was high time to interfere, for the discussion was getting too hot, so he said—

"Come, now, there is no doubt one of you is very teazing and the other is very crabbed, and I must say I am surprised at both of you."

The Patagonian, without understanding the cause, could see that the two friends were quarrelling. He began to smile, and said, quietly—

"It's the north wind."

"The north wind," exclaimed Paganel; "what's the north wind to do with it?"

"Ah, it is just that," said Glenarvan. "It's the north wind that has put you in a bad temper. I have heard that, in South America, this wind greatly irritates the nervous system."

"By St. Patrick, Edward, you are right," said the Major, laughing heartily.

But Paganel, in a towering rage, would not give up the contest, and turned upon Glenarvan, whose intervention in this jesting manner he resented.

"And so, my Lord, my nervous system is irritated?" he said.

"Yes Paganel, it is the north wind—a wind which causes many a crime in the Pampas, as the *tramontane* does in the Campagna of Rome."

"Crimes!" returned the geographer. "Do I look like a man that would commit crimes?"

"That's not exactly what I said."

"Tell me at once that I want to assassinate you?"

"Well, I am really afraid," replied Glenarvan, bursting into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, in which all the others joined.

Paganel said no more, but went off in front alone, and came back in a few minutes quite himself, as if he had completely forgotten his grievance.

At eight o'clock in the evening, Thalcave, who was considerably in advance of the rest, descried in the distance the much-desired lake, and less than a quarter of an hour they reached its banks; but a grievous disappointment awaited them—the lake was dried up.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SEARCH FOR WATER.

LAKE SALINAS ends the string of lagoons connected with the Sierras Ventana and Guamini. Numerous expeditions were formerly made there from Buenos Ayres, to collect the salt deposited on its banks, as the waters contain great quantities of chloride of sodium.

But when Thalcave spoke of the lake as supplying drinkable water, he was thinking of the *rios* of fresh water which run into it. Those streams, however, were all dried up also; the burning sun had drank up everything liquid, and the consternation of the travellers may be imagined at the discovery.

Some action must be taken immediately, however; for what little water still remained was almost bad, and could not quench thirst. Hunger and fatigue were forgotten in the face of this imperious necessity. A sort of leather tent, called a *roukah*, which had been left by the natives, afforded the party a temporary resting-place, and the weary horses stretched themselves along the muddy banks, and tried to browse on the marine plants

and dry reeds they found there—nauseous to the taste as they must have been.

As soon as the whole party were ensconced in the *roukah,* Paganel asked Thalcave what he thought was best to be done. A rapid conversation followed, a few words of which were intelligible to Glenarvan. Thalcave spoke calmly, but the lively Frenchman gesticulated enough for both. After a little, Thalcave sat silent and folded his arms.

"What does he say?" asked Glenarvan. "I fancied he was advising us to separate."

"Yes, into two parties. Those of us whose horses are so done out with fatigue and thirst that they can scarcely drag one leg after the other, are to continue the route as they best can, while the others, whose steeds are fresher, are to push on in advance towards the river Guamini, which throws itself into Lake San Lucas about thirty-one miles off. If there should be water enough in the river, they are to wait on the banks till their companions reach them; but should it be dried up, they will hasten back and spare them a useless journey.

"And what will we do then?" asked Tom Austin.

"Then we shall have to make up our minds to go seventy-two miles south, as far as the commencement of the Sierra Ventana, where rivers abound."

"It is wise counsel, and we will act upon it without loss of time. My horse is in tolerable good trim, and I volunteer to accompany Thalcave."

"Oh, my Lord, take me," said Robert, as if it were a question of some pleasure party.

"But would you be able for it, my boy?"

"Oh, I have a fine beast, which just wants to have a gallop. Please, my Lord, to take me."

"Come then, my boy," said Glenarvan delighted not to leave Robert behind. "If we three don't manage to find out fresh water somewhere," he added, "we must be very stupid."

"Well, well, and what about me?" said Paganel.

"Oh, my dear Paganel, you must stay with the reserve corps," replied the Major. "You are too well acquainted with the 37th parallel and the river Guamini and the whole Pampas for us to let you go. Neither Mulrady, nor Wilson, nor myself would be able to rejoin Thalcave at the given rendezvous, but we will put ourselves under the banner of the brave Jacques Paganel with perfect confidence."

"I resign myself," said the geographer, much flattered at having supreme command.

"But mind, Paganel, no distractions," added the Major. "Don't you take us to the wrong place—to the borders of the Pacific, for instance."

"Oh, you insufferable Major; it would serve you right," replied Paganel, laughing. "But how will you manage to understand what Thalcave says, Glenarvan?" he continued.

"I suppose," replied Glenarvan, "the Patagonian and I won't have much to talk about; besides, I know a few Spanish words, and, at a pinch, I should not fear either making him understand me, or my understanding him."

"Go, then my worthy friend," said Paganel.

"We'll have supper first," rejoined Glenarvan, "and then sleep, if we can, till it is starting time."

The supper was not very reviving, without drink of any kind, and they tried to make up for the lack of it by a good sleep. But Paganel dreamt of water all night, of torrents and cascades, and rivers and ponds, and streams and brooks—in fact, he had a complete night-mare.

Next morning, at six o'clock, Thalcave, Glenarvan and Robert's horses were got ready. Their last ration of water was given them, and drank with more avidity than satisfaction, for it was filthy, disgusting stuff. The three travellers then jumped into their saddles, and set off shouting "*Au revoir!*" to their companions.

"Don't come back, whatever you do," called Paganel after them.

The *Desertio de las Salinas,* which they had to traverse, is a dry plain, covered with stunted trees not above ten feet high, and small mimosas, which the Indians call *curra-mammel;* and *jumes,* a bushy shrub, rich in soda. Here and there large spaces were covered with salt, which sparkled in the sunlight with astonishing brilliancy. These might easily have been taken for sheets of ice, had not the intense heat forbidden the illusion; and the contrast these dazzling white sheets presented to the dry burnt-up ground, gave the desert a most peculiar character. Eighty miles south, on the contrary, the Sierra Ventana, towards which the travellers might possibly have to betake themselves, should

the Guamini disappoint their hopes, the landscape was totally different. There the fertility is splendid; the pasturage is incomparable. The north-west declivity of the sierra is clothed with luxuriant grass, which extends to forests rich in various essences. There grow the *algarrobo*, a species of carob tree, the fruit of which is dried by the Indians, and ground to a powder, which they make into a sort of bread considerably eaten among them; the white *quebracho*, with long, flexible, drooping branches, like our weeping willow; the red *quebracho*, the wood of which is indestructible; the *naudubay*, which is extremely combustible, and often causes terrible conflagrations; the *viraro*, with violet flowers spreading in a pyramidal form; and lastly, the *timbo*, which grows eighty feet high, and has a top like an enormous parasol, under which whole flocks may find shelter from the sun. The Argentines have often tried to colonize this rich country, but have never succeeded in overcoming the hostility of the Indians.

Such fertility could not exist unless the sierra were well watered by numerous *rios;* and it is a fact, that even in times of greatest drought, the rivers of the Ventana have never dried up. Unfortunately, to reach them would necessitate a march of one hundred and thirty miles south; and this was why Thalcave thought it best to go first to the Guamini, as it was not only much nearer, but also on the direct line of route.

The three horses went forward might and main, as if instinctively knowing whither they were bound. Thaouka especially displayed a courage that neither

fatigue nor hunger could damp. He bounded like a bird over the dried-up *canadas* and the bushes of *curramammel*, his loud, joyous neighing seeming to bode success to the search. The horses of Glenarvan and Robert, though not so light-footed, felt the spur of his example, and followed him bravely. Thalcave inspirited his companions as much as Thaouka did his four-footed brethren. He sat motionless in the saddle, but often turned his head to look at Robert, and ever and anon gave him a shout of encouragement and approval, as he saw how well he rode. Certainly the boy deserved praise, for he was fast becoming an excellent cavalier.

"Bravo! Robert," said Glenarvan. "Thalcave is evidently congratulating you, my boy, and paying you compliments."

"What for, my Lord?"

"For your good horsemanship."

"I can hold firm on, that's all," replied Robert, blushing with pleasure at such an encomium.

"That is the principal thing, Robert; but you are too modest. I tell you that some day you will turn out an accomplished horseman."

"What would papa say to that?" said Robert, laughing. "He wants me to be a sailor."

"The one won't hinder the other. If all cavaliers wouldn't make good sailors, there is no reason why all sailors should not make good horsemen. To keep one's footing on the yards must teach a man to hold on firm; and as to managing the reins and making a horse

go through all sorts of movements, that's easily acquired. Indeed, it comes naturally."

"Poor father," said Robert; "how he will thank you for saving his life."

"You love him very much, Robert?"

"Yes, my Lord, dearly. He was so good to me and my sister. We were his only thought; and whenever he came home from his voyages, we were sure of some *souvenir* from all the places he had been to; and, better still, of loving words and caresses. Ah! if you knew him you would love him too. Mary is most like him. He has a soft voice like hers. That's strange for a sailor, isn't it?"

"Yes, Robert, very strange."

"I see him still," the boy went on, as if speaking to himself. "Good, brave papa. He put me to sleep on his knee, crooning an old Scotch ballad about the lochs of our country. The time sometimes comes back to me, but very confused like. So it does to Mary, too. Ah, my Lord, how we loved him. Well, I do think one needs to be little to love one's father like that."

"Yes, and to be grown up, my child, to venerate him," replied Glenarvan, touched by the boy's genuine affection.

During this conversation the horses had been slackening speed, and were only walking now.

"You will find him?" said Robert again, after a few minutes' silence.

"Yes, we'll find him," was Glenarvan's reply,

"Thalcave has set us on the track, and I have great confidence in him."

"Thalcave is a brave Indian, isn't he?" said the boy.

"That indeed he is."

"Do you know something, my Lord?"

"What is it, and then I will tell you?"

"That all the people you have with you are brave. Lady Helena, whom I love so, and the Major, with his calm manner, and Captain Mangles, and Monsieur Paganel, and all the sailors on the *Duncan*. How courageous and devoted they are."

"Yes, my boy, I know that," replied Glenarvan.

"And do you know that you are the best of all."

"No, most certainly I don't know that."

"Well, it is time you did, my Lord," said the boy, seizing his lordship's hand, and covering it with kisses.

Glenarvan shook his head, but said no more, as a gesture from Thalcave made them spur on their horses and hurry forward.

But it was soon evident that, with the exception of Thaouka, the wearied animals could not go quicker than walking pace. At noon they were obliged to let them rest for an hour. They could not go on at all, and refused to eat the *alfafares*, a poor, burnt-up sort of lucerne that grew there.

Glenarvan began to be uneasy. Tokens of sterility were not the least on the decrease, and the want of water might involve serious calamities. Thalcave said nothing, thinking, probably, that it would be time

enough to despair if the Guamini should be dried up—if, indeed, the heart of an Indian can ever despair.

Spur and whip had both to be employed to induce the poor animals to resume the route, and then they only crept along, for their strength was gone.

Thaouka, indeed, could have galloped swiftly enough, and reached the *rio* in a few hours, but Thalcave would not leave his companions behind, alone in the midst of a desert.

It was hard work, however, to get the animal to consent to walk quietly. He kicked, and reared, and neighed violently, and was subdued at last more by his master's voice than hand. Thalcave positively talked to the beast, and Thaouka understood perfectly, though unable to reply, for, after a great deal of arguing, the noble creature yielded, though he still champed the bit.

Thalcave did not understand Thaouka, it turned out, though Thaouka understood him. The intelligent animal felt humidity in the atmosphere, and drank it in with frenzy, moving and making a noise with his tongue, as if taking deep draughts of some cool refreshing liquid. The Patagonian could not mistake him now—water was not far off.

The two other horses seemed to catch their comrade's meaning, and, inspired by his example, made a last effort, and galloped forward after the Indian.

About three o'clock a white line appeared in a dip of the road, and seemed to tremble in the sunlight.

"Water!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Yes, yes! it is water!" shouted Robert.

They were right; and the horses knew it too, for there was no need now to urge them on; they tore over the ground as if mad, and in a few minutes had reached the river, and plunged in up to their chests.

Their masters had to go too, whether they would or not; but they were so rejoiced at being able to quench their thirst, that this compulsory bath was no grievance.

"Oh, how delicious this is!" exclaimed Robert, taking a deep draught.

"Drink moderately, my boy," said Glenarvan; but he did not set the example.

Thalcave drank very quietly, without hurrying himself, taking small gulps, but "as long as a lazo," as the Patagonians say. He seemed as if he were never going to leave off, and really there was some danger of his swallowing up the whole river.

At last Glenarvan said—

"Well, our friends won't be disappointed this time: they will be sure of finding clear, cool water when they get here—that is to say, if Thalcave leaves any for them."

"But couldn't we go to meet them? It would spare them several hours' suffering and anxiety."

"You're right, my boy; but how could we carry them this water? The leather bottles were left with Wilson. No; it is better for us to wait for them as we agreed. They can't be here till about the middle of the night, so the best thing we can do is to get a good bed and a good supper ready for them.

Thalcave had not waited for Glenarvan's proposition to prepare an encampment. He had been fortunate enough to discover on the banks of the *rio* a *ramada* or sort of enclosure, which had served as a fold for flocks, and was shut in on three sides. A more suitable place could not be found for their night's lodging, provided they had no fear of sleeping in the open air beneath the star-lit heavens; and none of Thalcave's companions had much solicitude on that score. Accordingly they took possession at once, and stretched themselves at full length on the ground in the bright sunshine, to dry their dripping garments.

"Well, now we've secured a lodging, we must think of supper," said Glenarvan. "Our friends must not have reason to complain of the couriers they sent to precede them; and if I am not much mistaken, they will be very satisfied. It strikes me that an hour's shooting won't be lost time. Are you ready, Robert?"

"Yes, my Lord," replied the boy, standing up, gun in hand.

Why Glenarvan proposed this was, that the banks of the Guamini seemed to be the general rendezvous of all the game in the surrounding plains. A sort of partridge peculiar to the Pampas, called *tinamous;* black wood-hens; a species of plover, called *teru-teru;* yellow rays, and water-fowl with magnificent green plumage, rose in coveys. No quadrupeds, however, were visible, but Thalcave pointed to the long grass and thick brushwood, and gave his friends to understand they were lying there in concealment.

Disdaining the feathered tribes when more substantial game was at hand, the hunters' first shots were fired into the underwood. Instantly there rose by the hundred roebucks and guanacos, like those that had swept over them that terrible night on the Cordilleras, but the timid creatures were so frightened that they were all out of gunshot in a twinkling. The hunters were obliged to content themselves with humbler game, though in an alimentary point of view nothing better could be wished. A dozen of red partridges and rays were speedily brought down, and Glenarvan also managed very cleverly to kill a *tay-tetre,* or peccary, a pachydermatous animal, the flesh of which is excellent eating.

In less than half an hour the hunters had all the game they required. Robert had killed a curious animal belonging to the order *Edentata,* an armadillo, a sort of tatou, covered with a hard bony shell, in moveable

pieces, and measuring a foot and a half long. It was very fat, and would make an excellent dish, the Patagonian said. Robert was very proud of his success.

Thalcave did his part by capturing a *nandou*, a species of ostrich, remarkable for its extreme swiftness.

There could be no entrapping such an animal, and

the Indian did not attempt it. He urged Thaouka to a gallop, and made a direct attack, knowing that if the first aim missed, the *nandou* would soon tire out horse and rider by involving them in an inextricable labyrinth of windings. The moment, therefore, that Thalcave got to a right distance, he flung his *bolas* with such a powerful hand, and so skilfully, that he caught the bird

round the legs and paralyzed his efforts at once. In a few seconds it lay flat on the ground.

The Indian had not made this capture for the mere pleasure and glory of such a novel chase. The flesh of the *nandou* is highly esteemed, and Thalcave felt bound to contribute his share of the common repast.

They returned to the *ramada*, bringing back the string of partridges, the ostrich, the peccary, and the armadillo. The ostrich and peccary were prepared for cooking by divesting them of their tough skins and cutting them up in thin slices. As to the armadillo, he carries his cooking apparatus with him, and all that had to be done was to place him in his own shell over the glowing embers.

The substantial dishes were reserved for the night comers, and the three hunters contented themselves with devouring the partridges, and washed down their meal with clear fresh water, which was pronounced superior to all the porter in the world, and even to the famous Highland *usquebaugh*, or whiskey.

The horses had not been overlooked. A large quantity of dry fodder was discovered lying heaped up in the *ramada*, and this supplied them amply with both food and bedding.

When all was ready the three companions wrapped themselves in their ponchos and stretched themselves on an eider down of *alfafares*, the usual bed of hunters on the Pampas.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RED WOLVES.

NIGHT came, but the orb of night was invisible to the inhabitants of the earth, for she was just in her first quarter. The dim light of the stars was all that illumined the plain. The waters of the Guamini ran silently, like a sheet of oil over a surface of marble. Birds, quadrupeds, and reptiles were resting motionless after the fatigues of the day, and the silence of the desert brooded over the far-spreading Pampas.

Glenarvan, Robert, and Thalcave, had followed the common example, and lay in profound slumber on their soft couch of lucerne. The worn-out horses had stretched themselves full length on the ground, except Thaouka, who slept standing, true to his high blood, proud in repose as in action, and ready to start at his master's call. Absolute silence reigned within the enclosure, over which the dying embers of the fire shed a fitful light.

However, the Indian's sleep did not last long; for about ten o'clock he woke, sat up, and turned his ear towards the plain, listening intently, with half-closed

eyes. An uneasy look began to depict itself on his usually impassive face. Had he caught scent of some party of Indian marauders, or of jaguars, water tigers, and other terrible animals that haunt the neighbourhood of rivers? Apparently it was the latter, for he threw a rapid glance on the combustible materials heaped up in the enclosure, and the expression of anxiety on his countenance seemed to deepen. This was not surprising, as the whole pile of *alfafares* would soon burn out, and could only ward off the attacks of wild beasts for a brief interval.

There was nothing to be done in the circumstances but wait; and wait he did, in a half-recumbent posture, his head leaning on his hands, and his elbows on his knees, like a man roused suddenly from his night's sleep.

A whole hour passed, and anyone except Thalcave would have lain down again on his couch, reassured by the silence round him. But where a stranger would have suspected nothing, the sharpened senses of the Indian detected the approach of danger.

As he was thus watching and listening, Thaouka gave a low neigh, and stretched his nostrils towards the entrance of the *ramada*.

This startled the Patagonian, and made him rise to his feet at once.

"Thaouka scents an enemy," he said to himself, going towards the opening, to make a careful survey of the plain.

Silence still prevailed, but not tranquillity; for Thalcave caught a glimpse of shadows moving noiselessly

over the tufts of *curra-mammel.* Here and there luminous spots appeared, dying out and rekindling constantly, in all directions, like fantastic lights dancing over the surface of an immense lagoon. An inexperienced eye might have mistaken them for fire-flies, which shine at night in many parts of the Pampas; but Thalcave was not deceived: he knew the enemies he had to deal with, and lost no time in loading his carbine and taking up his post in front of the fence.

He did not wait long, for a strange cry—a confused sound of barking and howling—broke over the Pampas, followed next instant, by the report of the carbine, which made the uproar a hundred times worse.

Glenarvan and Robert woke in alarm, and started to their feet instantly.

"What is it?" exclaimed Robert.

"Is it the Indians?" asked Glenarvan.

"No," replied Thalcave, "the *aguaras.*"

"*Aguaras?*" said Robert, looking enquiringly at Glenarvan.

"Yes," replied Glenarvan, "the red wolves of the Pampas."

They seized their weapons at once, and stationed themselves beside the Patagonian, who pointed towards the plain from whence the yelling resounded.

Robert drew back involuntarily.

"You are not afraid of wolves, my boy?" said Glenarvan.

"No, my Lord," said the lad, in a firm tone; "and, moreover, beside you I am afraid of ntohing."

"So much the better. These *aguaras* are not very formidable either, and, if it were not for their number, I should not give them a thought."

"Never mind! we are well armed; let them come."

"We'll give them a warm reception," rejoined Glenarvan.

His Lordship only spoke thus to re-assure the child, for a secret terror filled him at the sight of this legion of blood-thirsty animals let loose on them at midnight.

There might possibly be some hundreds, and what could three men do, even armed to the teeth, against such a multitude?

As soon as Thalcave said the word *aguara*, Glenarvan knew that he meant the red wolf, for this is the name given to it by the Pampas Indians. This voracious animal, called by naturalists the *Canis jubatus*, is in shape like a large dog, and has the head of a fox. Its fur is a reddish-cinnamon colour, and there is a black mane all down the back. It is a strong nimble animal, generally inhabiting marshy places, and pursuing aquatic animals by swimming, prowling about by night and sleeping during the day. Its attacks are particularly dreaded at the *estancias*, or sheep stations, as it often commits considerable ravages, carrying off the finest of the flock Singly the *aguara* is not much to be feared; but they generally go in immense packs, and one had better have to deal with a jaguar or couguar than with them.

Both from the noise of the howling and the multitude of shadows leaping about, Glenarvan had a pretty

good idea of the number of the wolves, and he knew they had scented a good meal of human flesh, or horse flesh, and none of them would go back to their dens without a share. It was certainly a very alarming situation to be in.

The assailants were gradually drawing closer. The horses displayed signs of the liveliest terror, with the exception of Thaouka, who stamped his foot, and tried to break loose and get out. His master could only calm him by keeping up a low continuous whistle.

Glenarvan and Robert had posted themselves so as to defend the opening of the *ramada.* They were just going to fire into the nearest ranks of the wolves, when Thalcave lowered their weapons.

"What does Thalcave mean?" asked Robert.

"He forbids our firing."

"And why?"

"Perhaps he thinks it is not the right time."

But this was not the Indian's reason, and so Glenarvan saw when he lifted the powder-flask, and showed him it was nearly empty.

"What's wrong?" asked Robert.

"We must husband our ammunition," was the reply. "To-day's shooting has cost us dear, and we are short of powder and shot. We can't fire more than twenty times."

The boy made no reply, and Glenarvan asked him if he was frightened.

"No, my Lord," he said.

"That's right," returned Glenarvan.

A fresh report resounded that instant. Thalcave had made short work of one assailant, more audacious than the rest, and the infuriated pack had retreated to within a hundred steps of the enclosure.

On a sign from the Indian, Glenarvan took his place, while Thalcave went back into the enclosure, and gathered up all the dried grass and *alfafares*, and, indeed, all the combustibles he could rake together, and made a pile of them at the entrance. Into this he flung one of the still glowing embers, and soon the bright flames shot up into the dark night. Glenarvan could now get a good glimpse of his antagonists, and saw that it was impossible to exaggerate their numbers or their fury. The barrier of fire just raised by Thalcave had redoubled their anger, though it had cut off their approach. Several of them, however, urged on by the hindmost ranks, pushed forward into the very flames, and burnt their paws for their pains.

From time to time another shot had to be fired, notwithstanding the fire to keep off the howling pack, and in the course of an hour fifteen dead animals lay stretched on the prairie.

The situation of the besieged was relatively speaking, less dangerous now. As long as the powder lasted and the barrier of fire burnt on, there was no fear of being overmastered. But what was to be done afterwards, when both means of defence failed at once?

Glenarvan's heart swelled as he looked at Robert. He forgot himself in thinking of this poor child, as he saw him showing a courage so above his years. Robert

was pale, but he kept his gun steady, and stood with firm foot, ready to meet the attacks of the infuriated wolves.

However, after Glenarvan had calmly surveyed the actual state of affairs, he determined to bring things to a crisis.

"In an hour's time," he said, "we shall neither have powder nor fire. It will never do to wait till then before we settle what to do."

Accordingly he went up to Thalcave, and tried to talk to him by the help of the few Spanish words his memory could muster, though their conversation was often interrupted by one or the other having to fire a shot.

It was no easy task for the two men to understand each other; but, most fortunately, Glenarvan knew a great deal of the peculiarities of the red wolf, otherwise he could never have interpreted the Indian's words and gestures.

As it was, fully a quarter of an hour elapsed before he could get any answer from Thalcave to tell Robert in reply to his inquiry.

"What does he say?"

"He says that, at any price, we must hold out till daybreak. The *aguara* only prowls about at night, and goes back to his lair with the first streak of dawn. It is a cowardly beast that loves the darkness and dreads the light—an owl on four feet."

"Very well, let us defend ourselves, then, till morning."

"Yes, my boy, and with knife thrusts, when gun and shots fail."

Already Thalcave had set the example, for whenever a wolf came too near the burning pile, the long arm of the Patagonian dashed through the flames, and came out again reddened with blood.

But very soon this means of defence would be at an end. About two o'clock, Thalcave flung his last arm-

ful of combustibles into the fire, and barely enough powder remained to load a gun five times.

Glenarvan threw a sorrowful glance round him. He thought of the lad standing there, and of his companions and those left behind, whom he loved so dearly.

Robert was silent. Perhaps the danger seemed less imminent to his imagination. But Glenarvan thought for him, and pictured to himself the horrible fate that

seemed to await him inevitably. Quite overcome by his emotions, he took the child in his arms, and straining him convulsively to his heart, pressed his lips on his forehead, while tears he could not restrain streamed down his cheeks.

Robert looked up into his face with a smile, and said, "I am not frightened."

"No, my child, no! and you are right. In two hours daybreak will come, and we shall be saved. Bravo, Thalcave! my brave Patagonian! Bravo!" he added, as the Indian that moment levelled two enormous beasts who endeavoured to leap across the barrier of flames.

But the fire was fast dying out, and the *denouement* of the terrible drama was approaching. The flames got lower and lower. Once more the shadows of night fell on the prairie, and the glaring eyes of the wolves glowed like phosphorescent balls in the darkness. A few minutes longer, and the whole pack would be in the enclosure.

Thalcave loaded his carbine for the last time, killed one more enormous monster, and then folded his arms. His head sank on his chest, and he appeared buried in deep thought. Was he planning some daring, impossible, mad attempt to repulse the infuriated horde? Glenarvan did not venture to ask.

At this very moment the wolves began to change their tactics. Their deafening howls suddenly ceased: they seemed to be going away. Gloomy silence spread over the prairie, and made Robert exclaim :—

"They're gone!"

But Thalcave, guessing his meaning, shook his head. He knew they would never relinquish their sure prey till daybreak made them hasten back to their dens.

Still, their plan of attack had evidently been altered. They no longer attempted to force the entrance, but their new manœuvres only heightened the danger.

They had gone round the *ramada*, as by common consent, and were trying to get in on the opposite side.

The next minute they heard their claws attacking the mouldering wood, and already formidable paws and hungry savage jaws had found their way through the palings. The terrified horses broke loose from their halters and ran about the enclosure, mad with fear.

Glenarvan put his arms round the young lad, and resolved to defend him as long as his life held out. Possibly he might have made a useless attempt at flight, when his eye fell on Thalcave.

The Indian had been stalking about the *ramada* like a stag, when he suddenly stopped short, and going up to his horse, who was trembling with impatience, began to saddle him with the most scrupulous care, without forgetting a single strap or buckle. He seemed no longer to disturb himself in the least about the wolves outside, though their yells had redoubled in intensity. A dark suspicion crossed Glenarvan's mind as be watched him.

"He is going to desert us," he exclaimed at last, as he saw him seize the reins, as if preparing to mount.

"He! never!" replied Robert Instead of deserting them, the truth was that the Indian was going to try and save his friends by sacrificing himself.

Thaouka was ready, and stood champing his bit. He reared up and his splendid eyes flashed fire; he understood his master.

But just as the Patagonian caught hold of the horse's mane, Glenarvan seized his arm with a convulsive grip, and said, pointing to the open prairie:

"You are going away?"

"Yes," replied the Indian, understanding his gesture. Then he said a few words in Spanish, which meant, "*Thaouka; good horse; quick: will draw all the wolves away after him.*"

"Oh, Thalcave," exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Quick, quick!" replied the Indian, while Glenarvan said, in a broken agitated voice to Robert,

"Robert, my child, do you hear him? He wants to sacrifice himself for us. He wants to rush away over the Pampas, and turn off the wolves from us by attracting them to himself."

"Friend Thalcave," returned Robert, throwing himself at the feet of the Patagonian, "friend Thalcave, don't leave us!"

"No," said Glenarvan, "he shall not leave us."

And turning towards the Indian, he said, pointing to the frightened horses, "Let us go together."

"No," replied Thalcave, catching his meaning. "Bad beasts; frightened; Thaouka, good horse."

"Be it so, then!" returned Glenarvan. "Thalcave

will not leave you, Robert. He teaches me what I must do. It is for me to go, and for him to stay by you."

Then seizing Thaouka's bridle, he said, "I am going, Thalcave; not you."

"No," replied the Patagonian quietly.

"I am," exclaimed Glenarvan, snatching the bridle out of his hands. "I myself! Save this boy, Thalcave! I commit him to you."

Glenarvan was so excited that he mixed up English words with his Spanish. But what mattered the language at such a terrible moment. A gesture was enough; the two men understood each other.

However, Thalcave would not give in, and though every instant's delay but increased the danger, the discussion continued.

Neither Glenarvan nor Thalcave appeared inclined to yield. The Indian had dragged his companion towards the entrance of the *ramada,* and showed him the prairie, making him understand that now was the time when it was clear from the wolves; but that not a moment was to be lost, for should this manœuvre not succeed, it would only render the situation of those left behind more desperate, and that he knew his horse well enough to be able to trust his wonderful lightness and swiftness to save them all. But Glenarvan was blind and obstinate, and determined to sacrifice himself at all hazards, when suddenly he felt himself violently pushed back. Thaouka pranced up and reared himself bolt upright on his hind legs, and made a bound over the barrier of fire, while a clear young voice called out,

"God save you, my Lord."

But before either Thalcave or Glenarvan could get more than a glimpse of the boy, holding on fast by Thaouka's mane, he was out of sight.

"Robert, oh! you unfortunate boy," cried Glenarvan.

But even Thalcave did not catch the words, for his voice was drowned in the frightful uproar made by the wolves, who had dashed off at a tremendous speed on the track of the horse.

Thalcave and Glenarvan rushed out of the *ramada.* Already the plain had recovered its tranquillity, and all that could be seen of the red wolves was a moving line far away in the distant darkness.

Glenarvan sank prostrate on the ground, and clasping his hands despairingly. He looked at Thalcave, who smiled with his accustomed calmness, and said:

"Thaouka, good horse. Brave boy. He will save himself!"

"And suppose he falls?" said Glenarvan.

"He'll not fall."

But notwithstanding Thalcave's assurances poor Glenarvan spent the rest of the night in torturing anxiety. He seemed quite insensible now to the danger they had escaped through the departure of the wolves, and would have hastened immediately after Robert if the Indian had not kept him back by making him understand the impossibility of their horses overtaking Thaouka; and also that boy and horse had outdistanced

the wolves long since, and that it would be useless going to look for them till daylight.

At four o'clock morning began to dawn. A pale glimmer appeared in the horizon, and pearly drops of dew lay thick on the plain and on the tall grass, already stirred by the breath of day.

The time for starting had arrived.

"Now!" cried Thalcave, "come!"

Glenarvan made no reply, but took Robert's horse and sprung into the saddle. Next minute both men were galloping at full speed towards the west, in the line in which their companions ought to be advancing. They dashed along at a prodigious rate for a full hour, dreading every minute to come across the mangled corpse of Robert. Glenarvan had torn the flanks of his horse with his spurs in his mad haste, when at last gun-shots were heard in the distance at regular intervals, as if fired as a signal.

"There they are!" exclaimed Glenarvan; and both he and the Indian urged on their steeds to a still quicker pace, till in a few minutes more they came up to the little detachment conducted by Paganel. A cry broke from Glenarvan's lips, for Robert was there, alive and well, still mounted on the superb Thaouka, who neighed loudly with delight at the sight of his master.

"Oh, my child, my child!" cried Glenarvan, with indescribable tenderness in his tone.

Both he and Robert leaped to the ground, and flung themselves into each other's arms. Then the Indian hugged the brave boy in his turn.

"He is alive! he is alive!" repeated Glenarvan again and again.

"Yes," replied Robert; "and thanks to Thaouka."

This grateful recognition of his favourite's services was wholly unexpected by the Indian, who was talking to him that minute, caressing and speaking to him, as if human blood flowed in the veins of the proud creature. Then turning to Paganel, he pointed to

Robert, and said, "A brave!" and employing the Indian metaphor, he added, "his spurs did not tremble!"

But Glenarvan put his arms round the boy, and said, "Why wouldn't you let me or Thalcave run the risk of this last chance of deliverance, my son."

"My Lord," replied the boy, in tones of gratitude, "wasn't it my place to do it? Thalcave has saved my life already, and you—you are going to save my father!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE ARGENTINE PLAINS.

After the first joy of meeting was over, Paganel and his party, except perhaps the Major, were only conscious of one feeling—they were dying of thirst. Most fortunately for them the Guamini ran not far off, and about seven in the morning the little troop reached the enclosure on its banks. The precincts were strewed with the dead wolves, and, judging from their numbers, it was evident how violent the attack must have been, and how desperate the resistance.

As soon as the travellers had drank their fill, they began to demolish the breakfast prepared in the *ramada*, and did ample justice to the extraordinary viands. The *nandou* fillets were pronounced first-rate, and the armadillo was delicious.

"To eat moderately," said Paganel, "would be positive ingratitude to Providence. We must eat immoderately."

And so they did, but were none the worse for it. The water of the Guamini greatly aided digestion apparently.

Glenarvan, however, was not going to imitate Hannibal at Capua, and at ten o'clock next morning gave the signal for starting. The leathern bottles were filled with water, and the day's march commenced. The horses were so well rested that they were quite fresh again, and kept up a canter almost constantly. The country was not so parched up now, and consequently less sterile, but still a desert. No incident occurred of any importance during the 2nd and 3rd of November, and in the evening they reached the boundary of the Pampas, and camped for the night on the frontiers of the province of Buenos Ayres. Two-thirds of their journey were now accomplished. It was twenty-two days since they left the Bay of Talcahuano, and they had gone 450 miles.

Next morning they crossed the conventional line which separates the Argentine plains from the region of the Pampas. It was here that Thalcave hoped to meet the Caciques, in whose hands he had no doubt Harry Grant and his men were prisoners.

Of the fourteen provinces which compose the Argentine Republic, that of Buenos Ayres is the largest and most populous. Its frontiers extend to the Indian territories in the south, between the sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth degrees. The country is of wondrous fertility, the plains being covered with graminaceous and leguminous plants, and lying almost perfectly horizontal till it reaches the Tandil and Tapalquem sierras. The climate is particularly salubrious.

From the time of leaving the Guamini, there was a

marked change in the temperature, to the great relief of the travellers. It was much cooler, thanks to the violent and cold winds from Patagonia, which constantly agitate the atmospheric waves. Horses and men were glad enough of this, after what they had suffered from the heat and drought, and they felt animated with fresh ardour and confidence. But contrary to what Thalcave had said, the whole district appeared uninhabited, or rather abandoned.

Their route often led past or went right through small lagoons, sometimes of fresh water sometimes brakish. On the banks and bushes about these, king-wrens were hopping about, and larks singing joyously in concert with the tangaras, the rivals in colour of the brilliant humming birds. On the thorny bushes the nest of the *annubis* swung to and fro in the breeze like an Indian hammock; and on the shore magnificent flamingos stalked in regular order like soldiers marching, and spread out their flaming red wings. Their nests were seen in groups of thousands, forming a complete town, about a foot high, and resembling a truncated cone in shape. The flamingos did not disturb themselves in the least at the approach of the travellers, but this did ot suit Paganel.

"I have been very desirous a long time," he said to the Major, "to see a flamingo flying."

"All right," replied McNabbs.

"Now while I have the opportunity, I should like to make the most of it," continued Paganel.

"Very well; do it, Paganel."

"Come with me, then, Major, and you too, Robert. I want witnesses."

And all three went off towards the flamingos, leaving the others to go on in advance.

As soon as they were near enough, Paganel fired, only loading his gun, however, with powder, for he would not shed even the blood of a bird uselessly. The shot made the whole assemblage fly away *en masse*, while Paganel watched them attentively through his spectacles.

"Well, did you see them fly?" he asked the Major.

"Certainly I did," was the reply. "I could not help seeing them, unless I had been blind."

"Well, and did you think they resembled feathered arrows when they were flying?"

"Not in the least."

"Not a bit," added Robert.

"I was sure of it," said the geographer, with a satisfied air; "and yet the very proudest of modest men, my illustrious countryman, Chateaubriand, made the inaccurate comparison. Oh, Robert, comparison is the most dangerous figure in rhetoric that I know. Mind you avoid it all your life, and only employ it in a last extremity."

"Are you satisfied with your experiment?" asked McNabbs.

"Delighted."

"And so am I. But we had better push on now, for your illustrious Chateaubriand has put us more than a mile behind."

On rejoining their companions, they found Glenarvan busily engaged in conversation with the Indian, though apparently unable to make him understand. Thalcave's gaze was fixed intently on the horizon, and his face wore a puzzled expression.

The moment Paganel came in sight, Glenarvan called out—

"Come along, friend Paganel. Thalcave and I can't understand each other at all."

After a few minutes' talk with the Patagonian, the interpreter turned to Glenarvan and said—

"Thalcave is quite astonished at the fact, and certainly it is very strange that there are no Indians, nor even traces of any to be seen in these plains, for they are generally thick with companies of them, either driving along cattle stolen from the estancias, or going to the Andes to sell their zorillo cloths and plaited leather whips."

"And what does Thalcave think is the reason."

"He does not know; he is amazed, and that's all."

"But what description of Indians did he reckon on meeting in this part of the Pampas?"

Just the very ones who had the foreign prisoners in their hands, the natives under the rule of the caciques Calfoucoura, Catriel, or Yanchetruz."

"Who are these caciques?"

"Chiefs that were all powerful thirty years ago, before they were driven beyond the sierras. Since then they have been reduced to subjection as much as Indians can be, and they scour the plains of the Pampas and

the province of Buenos Ayres. I quite share Thalcave's surprise at not discovering any traces of them in regions which they usually infest as *salteadores,* or bandits."

"And what must we do then?"

"I'll go and ask him," replied Paganel.

After a brief colloquy he returned, and said—

"This is his advice, and very sensible it is, I think. He says we had better continue our route to the east as far as Fort Independence, and if we don't get news of Captain Grant there, we shall hear, at any rate, what has become of the Indians of the Argentine plains."

"Is Fort Independence far away?" asked Glenarvan.

"No, it is in the Sierra Tandil, about sixty miles off."

"And when shall we arrive?"

"The day after to-morrow, in the evening."

Glenarvan was considerably disconcerted by this circumstance. Not to find an Indian where in general there were only too many, was so unusual that there must be some grave cause for it; but worse still, if Harry Grant were a prisoner in the hands of any of those tribes, had he been dragged away with them to the north or south? Glenarvan felt that, cost what it might, they must not lose his track, and therefore decided to follow the advice of Thalcave, and go to the village of Tandil. They would find someone there to speak to, at all events.

About four o'clock in the evening a hill, which seemed a mountain in so flat a country, was sighted in

the distance. This was Sierra Tapalquem, at the foot of which the travellers camped that night.

The passage in the morning over this sierra was accomplished without the slightest difficulty; after having crossed the Cordillera of the Andes, it was easy work to ascend the gentle heights of such a sierra as this. The horses scarcely slackened speed. At noon they passed the deserted fort of Tapalquem, the first of the chain of forts which defend the southern frontiers from Indian marauders. But to the increasing surprise of Thalcave, they did not come across even the shadow of an Indian. About the middle of the day, however, three flying horsemen, well mounted and well armed, came in sight, gazed at them for an instant, and then sped away with inconceivable rapidity. Glenarvan was furious.

"Gauchos," said the Patagonian, designating them by the name which had caused such a fiery discussion between the Major and Paganel.

"Ah! the Gauchos," replied McNabbs. "Well, Paganel, the north wind is not blowing to-day. What do you think of those fellows yonder?"

"I think they look like regular bandits."

"And how far is it from looking to being, my good geographer?"

"Only just a step, my dear Major."

Paganel's admission was received with a general laugh, which did not in the least disconcert him. He went on talking about the Indians, however, and made this curious observation—

"I have read somewhere," he said, "that about the Arabs there is a peculiar expression of ferocity in the mouth, while the eyes have a kindly look. Now, in these American savages it is quite the reverse, for the eye has a particularly villanous aspect."

No physiognomist by profession could have better characterized the Indian race.

But desolate as the country appeared, Thalcave was on his guard against surprises, and gave orders to his party to form themselves in a close platoon. It was a useless precaution, however; for that same evening, they camped for the night in an immense *tolderai*, which they not only found perfectly empty, but which the Patagonian declared, after he had examined it all round, must have been uninhabited for a long time.

Next day, the first *estancias* of the Sierra Tandil came in sight. The *estancias* are large cattle stations for breeding cattle; but Thalcave resolved not to stop at any of them, but to go straight on to Fort Independence.

Trees now began to be visible again, the most of them planted by Europeans. They were generally round the *corrales*, or fenced-in enclosures for cattle, where thousands of oxen, sheep, cows, and horses peacefully grazed and fattened, all stamped with their master's name, burnt in with a red-hot iron, and guarded by numerous and vigilant dogs. The soil about the mountains, though impregnated with salt, supplies admirable fodder, and is especially chosen in selecting a place for an *estancia*, each of which is superintended by a *major-*

domo and his overseer, with four *peons* under him, to take charge of a thousand head of cattle.

These people lead the life of the great herdsmen in patriarchal times, their flocks being as numerous as, and perhaps even more so, than those that browsed on the plains of Mesopotamia; but here the family element is wanting, and, instead of being like the patriarchs of the Bible, the great *estanceros* of the Pampas, have all the coarseness of common cattle-dealers.

Paganel explained all this very lucidly to his companions, and an anthropological discussion ensued, in which even the Major showed great interest.

As they went along, a curious effect of *mirage* was observed, a common occurrence in flat plains. The *estancias* in the distance looked like large islands close in front, and the poplars and willows round them seemed reflected in clear water, which flowed in the paths of the travellers. The illusion was so perfect, that it was some time before the eye got used to it.

During the day they came across several *estancios*, and also one or two *saladeros*. The *saladeros* are places where the cattle are slaughtered, and also, as the name implies, salted. It is about the end of spring these disagreeable operations commence, when the *saladores* repair to the *corrales*, and catch the animals with the *lazo*, which they handle skilfully. The poor victims are then taken to the *saladero*, where bulls, oxen, cows, and sheep are killed, skinned, and cut up by thousands. But frequently the bulls make a violent resistance, and the butcher is transformed into a *toréador* at a bull-fight,

but he prosecutes his terrible calling with uncommon dexterity, and it must be said ferocity. In fact, this slaughtering is a frightful business. Nothing is more repulsive than the proximity of a *saladero,* for the air is loaded with fetid exhalations, and the air is deafened with the sounds which escape from the horrible enclosures, the prolonged howls of expiring animals, the coarse cries of the men, and the ominous barking of the dogs; while the *urubus* and the *auras,* the great vultures of the Argentine plains, come from twenty miles round, and hover in thousands over the spot, ready to snatch the still palpitating *débris* of the animals from the hands of the butchers. But at present the *saladeros* were silent, peaceful, and uninhabited. The slaughtering time had not come.

Thalcave urged his party on, for he wished to reach Fort Independence before night-fall. They passed several farms fortified by battlements and surrounded by a deep moat, the principal building being encircled by a terrace, from which the inhabitants could fire down on the marauders in the plain. Glenarvan might, perhaps, have got some information at these houses, but it was the surest plan to go straight on to the village of Tandil. Accordingly they went on without stopping, fording the *rio* of Los Huasos and also the Chapaléofu, a few miles further on. Soon they were treading the grassy slopes of the first ridges of the Sierra Tandil, and an hour afterwards the village appeared in the depths of a narrow gorge, and above it towered the lofty battlements of Fort Independence.

CHAPTER XXI.

FORT INDEPENDENCE.

THE Sierra Tandil rises a thousand feet above the level of the sea. It is a primordial chain—that is to say, anterior to all organic and metamorphic creation in this sense, that its texture and composition are being gradually modified by the influence of its internal heat. It is formed of a semi-circular ridge of gneiss hills, covered with fine short grass. The district of Tandil, to which it has given its name, includes all the south of the Province of Buenos Ayres, and terminates in a river which conveys north all the *rios* that take their rise on its slopes.

This district contains about four thousand inhabitants, and its chief place is the village of Tandil, lying at the foot of the southern peaks of the sierra, under the protection of Fort Independence. There is this peculiarity about it, which Paganel could hardly fail to have known—the village is peopled by French and Italians. It was France, indeed, who founded the first European settlements in Lower La Plata. In 1828, Fort Independence, designed to protect the country against the Indian

marauders, was erected by the efforts of François Parchappe. He was aided in his enterprise by a *savant* of the highest order, Alcide d'Orbigny, a man who thoroughly knew and studied and described all the countries of South America.

The village of Tandil is a place of some importance. By means of its "galeras," or immense bullock-waggons, well adapted to the prairie roads, it can communicate in twelve days with Buenos Ayres, and consequently carries on a good trade in cattle from the *estancias,* salt meat from the *saladeros,* and the many curious manufactures of Indian industry, such as cotton and woollen fabrics, besides the different articles they make in plaited leather, which are so greatly sought after. Tandil also contains in addition to many comfortable dwelling-houses, schools and churches.

Paganel after mentioning these particulars about the place, added that they were certain of getting some information in the village, and that, moreover, there was always a detachment of national troops in the fort. This decided Glenarvan to put up the horses in the stable of a decent-looking *fonda,* and go at once, under Thalcave's guidance, and accompanied by Robert, and the Major, and Paganel, to Fort Independence.

After making a short ascent up the sierra, they reached the postern gate, so carelessly guarded by an Argentine sentinel, that they passed through without difficulty, a circumstance which betokened extreme negligence or extreme security.

Some soldiers were at drill on the parade ground of

the fort, but the oldest was not above twenty years of age, and the youngest scarcely seven. In fact, it was just a dozen children and young boys practising fencing, and very well they did it. Their uniform consisted simply of a striped shirt, fastened round the waist by a leather band. Nether garments were entirely wanting, there was not even an attempt at trousers, drawers, or kilt; but light as this costume was, it was enough for the climate. Paganel thought certainly this was a government which would not ruin itself with gold lace at any rate. Each of the juvenile soldiers carried a percussion gun and a sabre, though the gun was too heavy and the sabre too long for the little ones. There was a strong family likeness in them all, even in the corporal who was instructing them. They all had the same sunburnt face, and anyone would have said they were brothers, as in fact they were—twelve brothers exercising under another, a thirteenth.

Paganel was not astonished; he was acquainted with Argentine statistics, and knew that the average number of children in a family is nine, but what certainly did surprise him exceedingly was, that the youngsters were going through the different manœuvres in the French way, and executing them with admirable precision. Frequently too, the orders of the corporal were given in the geographer's mother tongue.

"Well, that's strange!" he said.

But Glenarvan had neither come to Fort Independence to see juveniles at drill, nor to trouble himself about their nationality and origin. He soon dragged

Paganel away, and requested him to ask for the commanding officer of the garrison. Paganel did so, and was directed to a small house hard by, which served as barracks.

A few minutes afterwards the Commandant appeared in person. He was a vigorous man about fifty years of age, of military aspect, with greyish hair, and an imperious eye, as far as one could see through the clouds of tobacco-smoke which escaped from his short pipe. His walk reminded Paganel instantly of the old subalterns in his own country.

Thalcave was spokesman, and addressing the officer presented Lord Glenarvan and his companions. While he was speaking, the Commandant kept staring fixedly at Paganel in rather an embarrassing manner. The geographer could not understand what he meant by it, and was just about to interrogate him, when the Commandant came forward, and seizing both his hands in the most free-and-easy fashion, said in a joyous voice, in the mother tongue of the geographer—

"A Frenchman!"

"Yes, a Frenchman," replied Paganel.

"Ah! delightful! Welcome, welcome. I am a Frenchman too," he added, shaking Paganel's hand with such vigour as to be almost alarming.

"Is he a friend of yours, Paganel?" asked the Major.

"Yes," said Paganel, somewhat proudly. "One has friends in every division of the globe."

After he had succeeded in disengaging his hand, though not without difficulty, from the living vice in which it was held, a lively conversation ensued. Glenarvan would fain have put in a word about the business on hand, but the Commandant related his entire history, and was not in a mood to stop till he had done. It was evident that the worthy man must have left his native country many years back, for his mother tongue had grown unfamiliar, and if he had not forgotten the words he certainly did not remember how to put them together. He spake more like a negro belonging to a French colony.

The fact was that the Governor of Fort Independence was a French sergeant, an old comrade of Parchappe. He had never left the fort since it had been built in 1828; and, strange to say, he commanded it with the consent of the Argentine Government. He was a man about fifty years of age, a Basque by birth, and his name was Manuel Ipharaguerre, so that he was almost a Spaniard. A year after his arrival in the country, he was naturalized, took service in the Argentine army, and married an Indian girl, who was then nursing twin babies six months old—two boys, be it understood, for the good wife of the Commandant would have never thought of presenting her husband with girls. Manuel could not conceive of any state but the military one, and he hoped in due time, with the help of God, to offer the republic a whole company fo young soldiers.

"You saw them. Charming! good soldiers are

José, Juan, and Miquele! Pepe, seven-year old; Pepe can handle a gun."

Pepe, hearing himself complimented, brought his two little feet together, and presented arms with perfect grace.

"He'll get on!" added the sergeant. "He'll be Colonel-major or Brigadier-general some day."

Sergeant Manuel seemed so enchanted that it would have been useless to express a contrary opinion, either to the profession of arms or the probable future of his children. He was happy, and as Goethe says, "Nothing that makes us happy is an illusion."

All this talk took up a quarter of an hour, to the great astonishment of Thalcave. The Indian could not understand how so many words could come out of one throat. No one interrupted the sergeant, but all things come to an end, and at last even he was silent, but not till he had made his guests enter his dwelling, and be presented to Madame Ipharaguerre. Then, and not till then, did he ask his guests what had procured him the honour of their visit. Now or never was the moment to explain, and Paganel, seizing the chance at once, began an account of their journey across the Pampas, and ended by inquiring the reason of the Indians having deserted the country.

"Ah! there was no one!" replied the sergeant, shrugging his shoulders. "Really, no one, and us too, our arms crossed! Nothing to do!"

"But why?"

"War."

"War?"

"Yes, civil war between the Paraguayans and Buenos Ayriens," replied the sergeant.

"Well?"

"Well, Indians all in the north, in the rear of General Flores. Indian pillagers find pillage there."

"But where are the Caciques?"

"Caciques are with them."

"What! Catriel?"

"There is no Catriel."

"Nor Calfoucoura?"

"There is no Calfoucoura."

"And is there no Yanchetruz?"

"No, no Yanchetruz."

The reply was interpreted by Thalcave, who shook his head and gave an approving look. The Patagonian was either unaware of or had forgotten that civil war was decimating the two parts of the republic—a war which ultimately required the intervention of Brazil. The Indians have everything to gain by these intestine strifes, and cannot lose such fine opportunities of plunder. There was no doubt the sergeant was right in assigning war then as the cause of the forsaken appearance of the plains.

But this circumstance upset all Glenarvan's projects for if Harry Grant was a prisoner in the hands of the Caciques, he must have been dragged north with them. How and where should they ever find him if that were the case? Should they attempt a perilous and almost useless journey to the northern border of the Pampas?

It was a serious question which would need to be well talked over.

However, there was one inquiry more to make to the sergeant, and it was the Major who thought of it, for all the others looked at each other in silence.

"Had the sergeant heard whether any Europeans were prisoners in the hands of the Caciques?"

Manuel looked thoughtful for a few minutes, like a man trying to ransack his memory. At last he said—

"Yes."

"Ah!" said Glenarvan, catching at the fresh hope.

They all eagerly crowded round the sergeant, exclaiming—

"Tell us, tell us."

"It was some years ago," replied Manuel. "Yes; all I heard was that some Europeans were prisoners, but I never saw them."

"You are making a mistake," said Glenarvan. "It can't be some years ago; the date of the shipwreck is explicitly given. The *Britannia* was wrecked in June, 1862. It is scarcely two years ago."

"Oh, more than that, my Lord."

"Impossible!" said Paganel.

"Oh, but it must be. It was when Pepe was born. There were two prisoners."

"No, three!" said Glenarvan.

"Two!" replied the sergeant, in a positive tone.

"Two?" echoed Glenarvan, much surprised. "Two Englishmen?"

"No, no. Who is talking of Englishmen? No; a Frenchman and an Italian."

"An Italian who was massacred by the Poyuches?" exclaimed Paganel.

"Yes; and I heard afterwards that the Frenchman was saved."

"Saved!" exclaimed young Robert, his very life hanging on the lips of the sergeant.

"Yes; delivered out of the hands of the Indians."

Paganel struck his forehead with an air of desperation, and said at last—

"Ah! I understand. It is all clear now; everything is explained."

"But what is it?" asked Glenarvan, with as much impatience.

"My friends," replied Paganel, taking both Robert's hands in his own, "we must resign ourselves to a sad disaster. We have been on a wrong track. The prisoner mentioned is not the captain at all, but one of my own countrymen; and his companion, who was assassinated by the Poyuches, was Marco Vazello. The Frenchman was dragged along by the cruel Indians several times as far as the shores of the Colorado, but managed at length to make his escape, and return to Colorado. Instead of following the track of Harry Grant, we have fallen on that of young Guinnard."

This announcement was heard with profound silence. The mistake was palpable. The details given by the sergeant, the nationality of the prisoner, the murder of his companion, his escape from the hands of

the Indians, all evidenced the fact. Glenarvan looked at Thalcave with a crestfallen face, and the Indian, turning to the sergeant, asked whether he had never heard of three English captives.

"Never," replied Manuel. "They would have known of them at Tandil, I am sure. No, it cannot be."

After this, there was nothing further to do at Fort Independence, but to shake hands with the Commandant, and thank him and take leave.

Glenarvan was in despair at this complete overthrow of his hopes, and Robert walked silently beside him, with his eyes full of tears. Glenarvan could not find a word of comfort to say to him. Paganel gesticulated, and talked away to himself. The Major never opened his mouth, nor Thalcave, whose *amour propre,* as an Indian, seemed quite wounded by having allowed himself to go on a wrong scent. No one, however, would have thought of reproaching him for an error so pardonable.

They went back to the *fonda,* and had supper; but it was a gloomy party that surrounded the table. It was not that any one of them regretted the fatigue they had so heedlessly endured or the dangers they had run, but they felt their hope of success was gone, for there was no chance of coming across Captain Grant between the Sierra Tandil and the sea, as Sergeant Manuel must have heard if any prisoners had fallen into the hands of the Indians on the coast of the Atlantic. Any event of this nature would have

attracted the notice of the Indian traders who traffic between Tandil and Carmen, at the mouth of the Rio Negro. The best thing to do now was to get to the *Duncan* as quick as possible at the appointed rendezvous.

Paganel asked Glenarvan, however, to let him have the document again, on the faith of which they had set out on so bootless a search. He read it over and over, as if trying to extract some new meaning out of it.

"Yet nothing can be clearer," said Glenarvan; "it gives the date of the shipwreck, and the manner, and the place of the captivity in the most categorical manner."

"That it does not—no, it does not!" exclaimed Paganel, striking the table with his fist. "Since Harry Grant is not in the Pampas, he is not in America; but where he is the document must say, and it shall say, my friends, or my name is not Jacques Paganel anv longer."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE INUNDATION.

A DISTANCE of 150 miles separates Fort Independence from the shores of the Atlantic. Unless unexpected and certainly improbable delays should occur, in four days Glenarvan would rejoin the *Duncan*. But to return on board without Captain Grant, and after having so completely failed in his search, was what he could not bring himself to do. Consequently, when next day came, he gave no orders for departure; the Major took it upon himself to have the horses saddled, and make all preparations. Thanks to his activity, next morning at eight o'clock the little troop was descending the grassy slopes of the Sierra.

Glenarvan, with Robert at his side, galloped along without saying a word. His bold, determined nature made it impossible to take failure quietly. His heart throbbed as if it would burst, and his head was burning. Paganel excited by the difficulty, was turning over and over the words of the document, and trying to discover some new meaning. Thalcave was perfectly silent, and left Thaouka to lead the way. The Major, always con-

fident, remained firm at his post, like a man on whom discouragement takes no hold. Tom Austin and his two sailors shared the dejection of their master. A timid rabbit happened to run across their path, and the superstitious men looked at each other in dismay.

"A bad omen," said Wilson.

"Yes, in the Highlands," repeated Mulrady.

"What's bad in the Highlands is not better here," returned Wilson, sententiously.

Towards noon they had crossed the Sierra, and descended into the undulating plains which extend to the sea. Limpid *rios* intersected these plains, and lost themselves among the tall grasses. The ground had once more become a dead level, the last mountains of the Pampas were passed, and a long carpet of verdure unrolled itself over the monotonous prairie beneath the horses' tread.

Hitherto the weather had been fine, but to-day the sky presented anything but a reassuring appearance. The heavy vapours generated by the high temperature of the preceding days, hung in thick clouds which ere long would empty themselves in torrents of rain. Moreover, the vicinity of the Atlantic, and the prevailing west wind, made the climate of this district particularly damp. This was evident by the fertility and abundance of the pasture and its dark colour. However, the clouds still remained unbroken for the present, and in the evening after a brisk gallop of forty miles, the horses stopped on the brink of deep *canadas*, immense natural trenches filled with water. No shelter was near, and

ponchos had to serve both for tents and coverlets as each man lay down and fell asleep beneath the threatening sky.

Next day the presence of water become still more sensibly felt; it seemed to exude from every pore of the ground. Soon large ponds, some just beginning to form and some already deep, lay across the route to the east. As long as they had only to deal with lagoons, circumscribed pieces of water unencumbered with aquatic plants, the horses could get through well enough, but when they encountered moving sloughs called *pentanos,* it was harder work. Tall grass blocked them up, and they were involved in the peril before they were aware.

These bogs had already proved fatal to more than one living thing, for Robert, who had got a good bit ahead of the party, came rushing back at full gallop, calling out—

"Monsieur Paganel, Monsieur Paganel, a forest of horns."

"What!" exclaimed the geographer. "You have found a forest of horns!"

"Yes, yes, or at any rate a coppice."

"A coppice!" replied Paganel, shrugging his shoulders. "My boy, you are dreaming."

"I am not dreaming, and you will see for yourself. Well, this is a strange country. They sow horns, and they sprout up like wheat. I wish I could get some of the seed."

"The boy is really speaking seriously," said the Major.

"Yes, Mr. Major, and you will soon see I am right."

The boy had not been mistaken, for presently they found themselves in front of an immense field of horns, regularly planted and stretching far out of sight. It was a complete copse, low and close packed, but a strange sort.

"Well?" said Robert.

"This is peculiar, certainly," said Paganel, and he turned round to question Thalcave on the subject.

"The horns come out of the ground," replied the Indian, "but the oxen are down below."

"What!" exclaimed Paganel; "do you mean to say that a whole herd was caught in that mud and buried alive?"

"Yes," said the Patagonian.

And so it was. An immense herd had been suffocated side by side in this enormous bog, and this was not the first occurrence of the kind which had taken place in the Argentine plains.

An hour afterwards and the field of horns lay two miles behind.

Thalcave was somewhat anxiously observing a state of things which appeared to him unusual. He frequently stopped and raised himself on his stirrups and looked around. His great height gave him a commanding view of the whole horizon; but after a keen rapid survey, he quickly resumed his seat and went on. About a mile further he stopped again, and leaving the straight route, made a circuit of some miles north and south, and then returned and fell back in his place at the head of the

troop, without saying a syllable as to what he hoped or feared. This strange behaviour, several times repeated, made Glenarvan very uneasy, and quite puzzled Paganel. At last, at Glenarvan's request, he asked the Indian about it.

Thalcave replied that he was astonished to see the plains so saturated with water. Never to his knowledge, since he had followed the calling of guide, had he found the ground in this soaking condition. Even in the rainy season, the Argentine plains had always been passable.

"But what is the cause of this increasing humidity?" said Paganel.

"I do not know, and what if I did?"

"Could it be owing to the *rios* of the Sierra being swollen to overflowing by the heavy rains?"

"Sometimes they are."

"And is it the case now?"

"Perhaps."

Paganel was obliged to be content with this unsatisfactory reply, and went back to Glenarvan to report the result of his conversation.

"And what does Thalcave advise us to do?" said Glenarvan.

Paganel went back to the guide, and asked him.

"Go on fast," was the reply.

This was easier said than done. The horses soon tired of treading over ground which gave way at every step. It sank each moment more and more till it seemed half under water.

They quickened their pace, but could not go fast

enough to escape the water, which rolled in great sheets at their feet. Before two hours the cataracts of the sky opened and deluged the plain in true tropical torrents of rain. Never was there a finer occasion for displaying philosophic equanimity. There was no shelter, and nothing for it but to bear it stolidly. The p nchos were streaming like the overflowing gutter-spouts on the roof of a house, and the unfortunate horsemen had to submit to a double bath, for their horses dashed up the water to their waists at every step.

In this drenching, shivering state, and worn out with fatigue, they came, towards evening, to a miserable *rancho*, which could only have been called a shelter by people not very fastidious, and certainly only travellers in extremity would have even entered it; but Glenarvan and his companions had no choice, and were glad enough to burrow in this wretched hovel, though it would have been despised by even a poor Indian of the Pampas. A miserable fire of grass was kindled, which gave out more smoke than heat, and was very difficult to keep alight, as the torrents of rain which dashed against the ruined cabin outside found their way within, and fell down in large drops from the roof. Twenty times over, the fire would have been extinguished if Mulrady and Wilson had not kept off the water.

The supper was a dull meal, and neither appetising nor reviving. Only the Major seemed to eat with any relish. The impassive McNabbs was superior to all circumstances. Paganel, Frenchman as he was, tried to joke, but the attempt was a failure.

"My jests are damp," he said, "they miss fire."

The only consolation in such circumstances was to sleep, and accordingly each one lay down and endeavoured to find in slumber a temporary forgetfulness of his discomforts and fatigues. The night was stormy, and the planks of the *rancho* cracked before the blast, as if every instant they would give way. The poor horses outside, exposed to all the inclemency of the weather, were making piteous moans, and their masters were suffering quite as much inside the ruined *rancho*. However, sleep overpowered them at length. Robert was the first to close his eyes and lean his head against Glenarvan's shoulder; and soon all the rest were soundly sleeping too, under the guardian eye of Heaven.

The night passed safely, and no one stirred till Thaouka woke them by tapping vigorously against the *rancho* with his hoof. He knew it was time to start, and at a push could give the signal as well as his master. They owed the faithful creature too much to disobey him, and set off immediately.

The rain had abated, but floods of water still covered the ground. Paganel, on consulting his map, came to the conclusion that the *rios* Grande and Vivarota, into which the water from the plains generally runs, must have been united in one large bed several miles in extent.

Extreme haste was imperative, for all their lives depended on it. Should the inundation increase, where could the find refuge? Not a single elevated point was visible on the whole circle of the horizon, and on such

level plains water would sweep along with fearful rapidity.

The horses were spurred on to the utmost, and Thaouka led the way, bounding over the water as if it had been his natural element. Certainly he might justly have been called a sea-horse, better than many of the amphibious animals who bear that name.

All of a sudden, about ten in the morning, Thaouka betrayed symptoms of violent agitation. He kept turning round towards the south, neighing continually, and snorting with wide-open nostrils. He reared violently, and Thalcave had some difficulty in keeping his seat. The foam from his mouth was tinged with blood from the action of the bit, pulled tightly by his master's strong hand, and yet the fiery animal would not be still. Had he been free, his master knew he would have fled away to the north as fast as his legs would have carried him.

"What is the matter with Thaouka?" asked Paganel. "Is he bitten by the leeches? They are very voracious in the Argentine streams."

"No," replied the Indian.

"Is he frightened at something, then?"

"Yes, he scents danger."

"What danger?"

"I don't know."

But, though no danger was apparent to the eye, the ear could catch the sound of a murmuring noise beyond the limits of the horizon, like the coming in of the tide. Soon a confused sound was heard of bellowing,

and neighing, and bleating, and about half a mile to the south immense flocks appeared rushing and tumbling over each other in the greatest disorder, as they hurried pell-mell along with inconceivable rapidity. They raised such a whirlwind of water in their course, that it was impossible to distinguish them clearly. A hundred whales of the largest size could hardly have dashed up the ocean waves more violently.

"*Anda, anda!*" (quick, quick), shouted Thalcave, in a voice like thunder.

"What is it, then?" asked Paganel.

"The rising," replied Thalcave.

"He means an inundation," explained Paganel, flying with the others after Thalcave, who had spurred on his horse towards the north.

It was high time, for about five miles south an immense towering wave was seen advancing over the plain, and changing the whole country into an ocean. The tall grass disappeared before it as if cut down by a scythe, and clumps of mimosas were torn up and drifted about like floating islands.

The wave was speeding on with the rapidity of a race-horse, and the travellers fled before it like a cloud before a storm-wind. They looked in vain for some harbour of refuge, and the terrified horses galloped so wildly along that the riders could hardly keep their saddles.

"*Anda, anda!*" shouted Thalcave, and again they spurred on the poor animals till the blood ran from their lacerated sides. They stumbled every now and

then over great cracks in the ground, or got entangled in the hidden grass below the water. They fell, and were pulled up only to fall again and again, and be pulled up again and again. The level of the waters was sensibly rising, and less than two miles off the gigantic wave reared its crested head.

For a quarter of an hour this supreme struggle with the most terrible of elements lasted. The fugitives could not tell how far they had gone, but, judging by the speed, the distance must have been considerable. The poor horses, however, were breast-high in water now, and could only advance with extreme difficulty. Glenarvan and Paganel, and, indeed, the whole party, gave themselves up for lost, as the horses were fast getting out of their depth, and six feet of water would be enough to drown them.

It would be impossible to tell the anguish of mind these eight men endured; they felt their own impotence in the presence of these cataclysms of nature so far beyond all human power. Their salvation did not lie in their own hands.

Five minutes afterwards, and the horses were swimming; the current alone carried them along with tremendous force, and with a swiftness equal to their fastest gallop; they must have gone full twenty miles an hour.

Any hope of deliverance seemed impossible, when the Major suddenly called out—

"A tree!"

"A tree?" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Yes, there, there!" replied Thalcave, pointing with his finger to a species of gigantic walnut-tree, which raised its solitary head above the waters.

His companions needed no urging forward now; this tree, so opportunely discovered, they must reach at all hazards. The horses very likely might not be able to get to it, but, at all events, the men would, he said, the current was bearing them right down to it.

Just at that moment, Tom Austin's horse gave a smothered neigh and disappeared. His master, freeing his feet from the stirrups, began to swim vigorously.

"Hang on to my saddle," called Glenarvan.

"Thanks, your honour, but I have good stout arms."

"Robert, how is your horse going?" asked his Lordship, turning to young Grant.

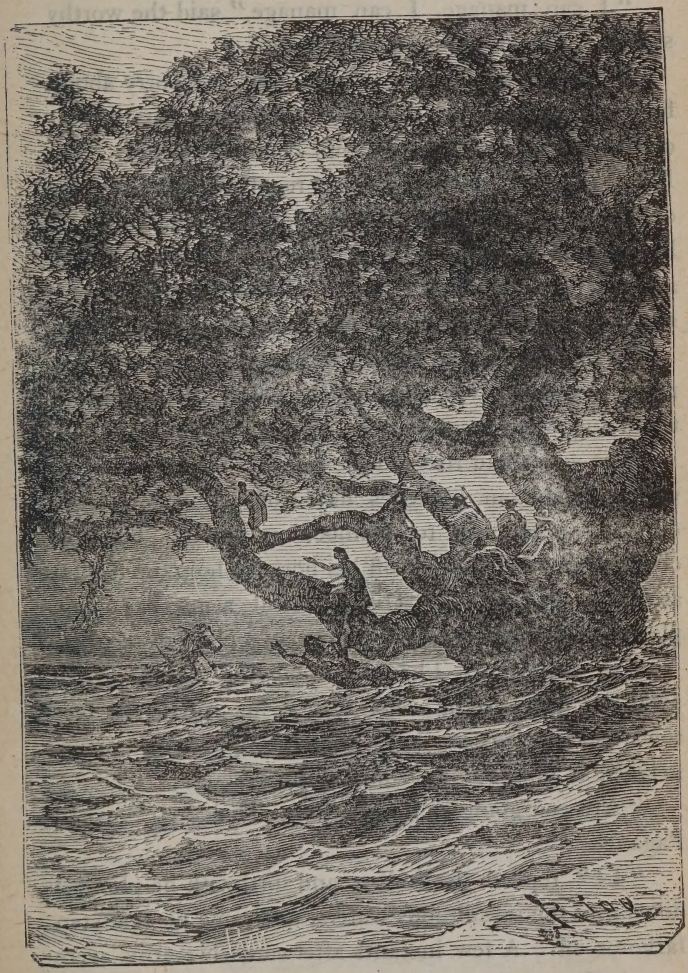
"Famously, my Lord, he swims like a fish."

"Look out!" shouted the Major, in a stentorian voice.

The warning was scarcely spoken before the enormous billow, a monstrous wave forty feet high, broke over the fugitives with a fearful noise. Men and animals all disappeared in a whirl of foam; a liquid mass, weighing several millions of tons, engulphed them in its seething waters.

When it had rolled on, the men reappeared on the surface, and counted each other rapidly; but all the horses, except Thaouka, who still bore his master, had gone down for ever.

"Courage, courage," repeated Glenarvan, supporting Paganel with one arm, and swimming with the other.



"I can manage, I can manage," said the worthy savant. "I am even not sorry——"

But no one ever knew what he was not sorry about, for the poor man was obliged to swallow down the rest of his sentence with half a pint of muddy water. The Major advanced quietly, making regular strokes, worthy of a master swimmer. The sailors took to the water like porpoises, while Robert clung to Thaouka's mane, and was carried along with him. The noble animal swam superbly, instinctively making for the tree in a straight line.

The tree was only twenty fathoms off, and in a few minutes was safely reached by the whole party; but for this refuge they must all have perished in the flood.

The water had risen to the top of the trunk, just to where the parent branches fork out. It was, consequently, quite easy to clamber up to it. Thalcave climbed up first, and got off his horse to hoist up Robert and help the others. His powerful arms had soon placed all the exhausted swimmers in a place of security.

But, meantime, Thaouka was being rapidly carried away by the current. He turned his intelligent face towards his master, and, shaking his long mane, neighed as if to summon him to his rescue.

"Are you going to forsake him, Thalcave?" asked Paganel.

"I!" replied the Indian, and forthwith he plunged down into the tumultuous waters, and came up again ten fathoms off. A few instants afterwards his arms were round Thaouka's neck, and master and steed were drifting together towards the misty horizon of the north.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A BIRD LIFE ON THE TREE.

THE tree on which Glenarvan and his companions had just found refuge, resembled a walnut-tree, having the same glossy foliage and rounded form. In reality, however, it was the *ombu*, which grows solitarily on the Argentine plains. The enormous and twisted trunk of this tree is planted firmly in the soil, not only by its great roots, but still more by its vigorous shoots, which fasten it down in the most tenacious manner. This was how it stood proof against the shock of the mighty billow.

This *ombu* measured in height a hundred feet, and covered with its shadow a circumference of one hundred and twenty yards. All this scaffolding rested on three great boughs which sprang from the trunk. Two of these rose almost perpendicularly, and supported the immense parasol of foliage, the branches of which were so crossed and intertwined and entangled, as if by the hand of a basket-maker, that they formed an impenetrable shade. The third arm, on the contrary, stretched right out in a horizontal position above the roaring waters, into which the lower leaves dipped. There was no want of room in the interior of this

gigantic tree, for there were great gaps in the foliage, perfect glades, with air in abundance, and freshness everywhere. To see the innumerable branches rising to the clouds, and the creepers running from bough to bough, and attaching them together while the sunlight glinted here and there among the leaves, one might have called it a complete forest instead of a solitary tree.

On the arrival of the fugitives a myriad of the feathered tribes fled away into the topmost branches, protesting by their outcries against this flagrant usurpation of their domicile. These birds, who themselves had taken refuge in the solitary *ombu,* were in hundreds, comprising blackbirds, starlings, isacas, hilgueros, and especially the picaflor, humming-birds of most resplendent colours. When they flew away it seemed as though a gust of wind had blown all the flowers off the tree.

Such was the asylum offered to the little band of Glenarvan. Young Grant and the agile Wilson were scarcely perched on the tree before they had climbed to the upper branches and put their heads through the leafy dome to get a view of the vast horizon. The ocean made by the inundation surrounded them on all sides, and, far as the eye could reach, seemed to have no limits. Not a single tree was visible on the liquid plain; the *ombu* stood alone amid the rolling waters, and trembled before them. In the distance, drifting from south to north, carried along by the impetuous torrent, they saw trees torn up by the roots, twisted branches, roofs torn off, destroyed *ranchos,* planks of sheds stolen by the deluge from *estancias,* carcases of

drowned animals, blood-stained skins, and on a shaky tree a complete family of jaguars, howling and clutching hold of their frail raft. Still further away, a black spot almost invisible, already caught Wilson's eye. It was Thalcave and his faithful Thaouka.

"Thalcave, Thalcave!" shouted Robert, stretching out his hands towards the courageous Patagonian.

"He will save himself, Mr. Robert," replied Wilson, "we must go down to his Lordship."

Next minute they had descended the three stages of boughs, and landed safely on the top of the trunk, where they found Glenarvan, Paganel, the Major, Austin, and Mulrady, sitting either astride or in some position they found more comfortable. Wilson gave an account of their investigations aloft, and all shared his opinion with respect to Thalcave. The only question was whether it was Thalcave who would save Thaouka, or Thaouka save Thalcave.

Their own situation meantime was much more alarming than his. No doubt the tree would be able to resist the current, but the waters might rise higher and higher, till the topmost branches were covered, for the depression of the soil made this part of the plain a deep reservoir. Glenarvan's first care, consequently, was to make notches by which to ascertain the progress of the inundation. For the present it was stationary, having apparently reached its height. This was re-assuring.

"And now what are we going to do?" said Glenarvan.

"Make our nest, of course!" replied Paganel gaily.

"Make our nest!" exclaimed Robert.

"Certainly, my boy, and live the life of birds, since we can't that of fishes."

"All very well, but who will fill our bills for us?" said Glenarvan.

"I will," said the Major.

All eyes turned towards him immediately, and there he sat in a natural arm-chair, formed of two elastic boughs, holding out his *alforjas* damp, but still intact.

"Oh, McNabbs, that's just like you," exclaimed Glenarvan, "you think of everything even under circumstances which would drive all out of your head."

"Since it was settled we were not going to be drowned, we had no intention of starving of hunger."

"I should have thought of it, too," said Paganel, "but I am so *distrait*."

"And what is in the *alforjas?*" asked Tom Austin.

"Food enough to last seven men for two days," replied McNabbs.

"And I hope the inundation will have gone down in twenty-four hours," said Glenarvan.

"Or that we shall have found some way of regaining *terra firma*," added Paganel.

"Our first business, then, now is to breakfast," said Glenarvan.

"I suppose you mean after we have made ourselves dry," observed the Major.

"And where's the fire," asked Wilson.

"We must make it," returned Paganel.

"Where."

"On the top of the trunk, of course."

"And what with."

"With the dead wood we can cut off the tree."

"But how will you kindle it?" said Glenarvan. "Our tinder is just like wet sponge."

"We can dispense with it," replied Paganel. "We only want a little dry moss, and a ray of sunshine, and the lens of my telescope, and you'll see what a fire I'll get to dry myself by. Who will go and cut wood in the forest?"

"I will," said Robert.

And off he scampered like a young cat into the depths of the foliage, followed by his friend Wilson. Paganel set to work to find dry moss, and had soon gathered sufficient. This he laid on a bed of damp leaves, just where the large branches began to fork out, forming a natural hearth, where there was little fear of conflagation.

Robert and Wilson speedily reappeared, each with an armful of dry wood, which they threw on the moss. By the help of the lens it was easily kindled, for the sun was blazing overhead. In order to ensure a proper draught, Paganel stood over the hearth with his long legs straddled out in the Arab manner. Then stooping down and raising himself with a rapid motion, he made a violent current of air with his poncho, which made the wood take fire, and soon a bright flame roared in the improvised brasier. After drying themselves, each in his own fashion, and hanging their ponchos on the tree, where they swung to and fro in the breeze, they breakfasted, carefully however rationing out the

provisions, for the morrow had to be thought of; the immense basin might not empty so soon as Glenarvan expected, and, any way, the supply was very limited. The *ombu* produced no fruit, though fortunately, it would likely abound in fresh eggs, thanks to the numerous nests stowed away among the leaves, not to speak of their feathered proprietors. These resources were by no means to be despised.

The next business was to install themselves as comfortably as they could, in prospect of a long stay.

"As the kitchen and dining-room are on the ground floor," said Paganel, "we must sleep on the first floor. The house is large, and as the rent is not dear, we must not cramp ourselves for room. I can see up yonder natural cradles, in which once safely tucked up we shall sleep as if we were in the best beds in the world. We have nothing to fear. Besides, we will watch, and we are numerous enough to repulse a fleet of Indians, and other wild animals."

"We only want fire-arms."

"I have my revolvers," said Glenarvan.

"And I have mine," replied Robert.

"But what's the good of them?" said Tom Austin, "unless Monsieur Paganel can find out some way of making powder."

"We don't need it," replied McNabbs, exhibiting a powder flask in a perfect state of preservation.

"Where did you get it from, Major?" asked Paganel,

"From Thalcave. He thought it might be useful

to us, and gave it to me before he plunged into the water to save Thaouka."

"Generous, brave Indian!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Yes," replied Tom Austin. "If all the Patagonians are cut after the same pattern, I must compliment Patagonia."

"I protest against leaving out the horse," said Paganel. "He is part and parcel of the Patagonian, and I'm much mistaken if we don't see them again, the one on the other's back."

"What distance are we from the Atlantic?" asked the Major.

"About forty miles at the outside," replied Paganel; "and now, friends, since this is Liberty Hall, I beg to take leave of you. I am going to choose an observatory for myself up there, and by the help of my telescope, let you know how things are going on in the world."

Forthwith the geographer set off, hoisting himself up very cleverly from bough to bough, till he disappeared beyond the thick foliage. His companions began to arrange the night quarters, and prepare their beds. But this was neither a long nor difficult task, and very soon they resumed their seats round the fire to have a talk.

As usual their theme was Captain Grant. In three days, should the water subside, they would be on board the *Duncan* once more. But Harry Grant and his two sailors, those poor shipwrecked fellows, would not be with them. Indeed, it even seemed after this ill success and this useless journey across America, that all chance

of finding them was gone for ever. Where could they commence a fresh quest? What grief Lady Helena and Mary Grant would feel on hearing there was no further hope!

"Poor sister!" said Robert. "It is all up with us."

For the first time Glenarvan could not find any comfort to give him. What could he say to the lad?

Had they not searched exactly where the document stated?

"And yet," he said, "this thirty-seventh degree of latitude is not a mere figure, and that it applies to the shipwreck or captivity of Harry Grant, is no mere guess or supposition. We read it with our own eyes."

"All very true, your Honour, "replied Tom Austin, "and yet our search has been unsuccessful."

"It is both a provoking and hopeless business," replied Glenarvan.

"Provoking enough certainly, but not hopeless. It is precisely because we have an uncontestable figure, that we should follow it up to the end."

"What do you mean?" asked Glenarvan. "What more can we do?"

"A very logical and simple thing, my dear Edward. When we go on board the *Duncan*, turn her beak head to the east, and go right along the thirty-seventh parallel til. we come back to our starting point if necessary."

"Do you suppose that I have not thought of that, Mr. McNabbs?" replied Glenarvan. "Yes, a hundred times. But what chance is there of success? To leave the American continent, wouldn't it be to go away from

the very spot indicated by Harry Grant, from this very Patagonia so distinctly named in the document."

"And would you recommence your search in the Pampas, when you have the certainty that the shipwreck of the *Britannia* neither occurred on the coasts of the Pacific nor the Atlantic?"

Glenarvan was silent.

"And however small the chance of finding Harry Grant by following up the given parallel, ought we not to try?"

"I don't say no," replied Glenarvan.

"And are you not of my opinion, good friends," added the Major, addressing the sailors.

"Entirely," said Tom Austin, while Mulrady and Wilson gave an assenting nod.

"Listen to me, friends," said Glenarvan after a few minutes' reflection; "and remember, Robert, this is a grave discussion. I will do my utmost to find Captain Grant; I am pledged to it, and will devote my whole life to the task if needs be. All Scotland would unite with me to save so devoted a son as he has been to her. I too quite think with you that we must follow the thirty-seventh parallel round the globe if necessary, however slight our chance of finding him. But that is not the question we have to settle. There is one much more important, and that is—should we from this time, and altogether, give up our search on the American continent?"

No one made any reply. Each one seemed afraid to pronounce the word.

"Well?" resumed Glenarvan, addressing himself especially to the Major.

"My dear Edward," replied McNabbs, "it would be incurring too great a responsibility for me to reply *hic et nunc*. It is a question which requires reflection. I must know first, through which countries the thirty-seventh parallel of southern latitude passes?"

"That's Paganel's business; he will tell you that," said Glenarvan.

"Let's ask him, then," replied the Major.

But the learned geographer was nowhere to be seen. He was hidden among the thick leafage of the *ombu*, and they must call out if they wanted him.

"Paganel, Paganel!" shouted Glenarvan.

"Here," replied a voice that seemed to come from the clouds.

"Where are you?"

"In my tower."

"What are you doing there?"

"Examining the wide horizon."

"Could you come down for a minute?"

"Do you want me?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"To know what countries the thirty-seventh parallel passes through."

"That's easily said. I need not disturb myself to come down for that."

"Very well, tell us now."

"Listen, then. After leaving America the thirty-seventh parallel crosses the Atlantic Ocean."

"And then?"

"It encounters Isle Tristan d'Acunha."

"Yes."

"It goes on two degrees below the Cape of Good Hope."

"And afterwards?"

"Runs across the Indian Ocean, and just touches Isle St. Pierre, in the Amsterdam group."

"Go on."

"It cuts Australia by the province of Victoria."

"And then"

"After leaving Australia in——"

This last sentence was not completed. Was the geographer hesitating, or didn't he know what to say?

No; but a terrible cry resounded from the top of the tree. Glenarvan and his friends turned pale and looked at each other. What fresh catastrophe had happened now? Had the unfortunate Paganel slipped his footing?

Already Wilson and Mulrady had rushed to his rescue when his long body appeared tumbling down from branch to branch.

But was he living or dead, for his hands made no attempt to seize anything to stop himself. A few minutes more, and he would have fallen into the roaring waters had not the Major's strong arm barred his passage.

"Much obliged, McNabbs," said Paganel.

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"How's this? What is the matter with you? What came over you? Another of your absent fits."

"Yes, yes," replied Paganel, in a voice almost inarticulate with emotion. "Yes. but this was some thing extraordinary."

"What was it?'

"I said we had made a mistake. We are making it still, and have been all along."

"Explain yourself."

"Glenarvan, Major, Robert, my friends," exclaimed Paganel, "all you that hear me, we are looking for Captain Grant where he is not to be found."

"What do you say?" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Not only where he is not now, but where he has never been."

CHAPTER XXIV.

BIRD LIFE STILL CONTINUED.

PROFOUND astonishment greeted these unexpected words of the learned geographer. What could he mean? Had he lost his senses? He spoke with such conviction, however, that all eyes turned towards Glenarvan, for Paganel's affirmation was a direct answer to his question; but Glenarvan shook his head, and said nothing, though evidently he was not inclined to favour his friend's views.

"Yes," began Paganel again, as soon as he had recovered himself a little; "yes, we have gone a wrong track, and read on the document what was never there."

"Explain yourself, Paganel," said the Major, "and more calmly, if you can."

"The thing is very simple, Major. Like you, I was in error; like you, I had rushed at a false interpretation, till about an instant ago, on the top of the tree, when I was answering your questions, just as I pronounced the word 'Australia,' a sudden flash came across my mind, and the document became clear as day."

"What!" exclaimed Glenarvan, "you mean to say that Harry Grant——"

"I mean to say," replied Paganel, "that the word *Austral* that occurs in the document is not a complete word, as we have supposed up till now, but just the root of the word *Australie.*"

"Well, that would be strange," said the Major.

"Strange!" repeated Glenarvan, shrugging his shoulders; "it is simply impossible."

"Impossible?" returned Paganel. "That is a word we don't allow in France."

"What!" continued Glenarvan, in a tone of the most profound incredulity, "you dare to contend, with the document in your hand, that the shipwreck of the *Britannia* happened on the shores of Australia."

"I am sure of it," replied Paganel.

"My conscience," exclaimed Glenarvan, "I must say I am surprised at such a declaration from the Secretary of a Geographical Society!"

"And why so?" said Paganel, touched in his weak point.

"Because, if you allow the word *Australie*, you must also allow the word *Indiens*, and Indians are never seen there."

Paganel was not the least surprised at this rejoinder. Doubtless he expected it, for he began to smile, and said—

"My dear Glenarvan, don't triumph over me too fast. I am going to floor you completely, and never was an Englishman more thoroughly defeated than you will be. It will be the revenge for Crecy and Agincourt.

"I wish nothing better. Take your revenge, Paganel."

"Listen, then. In the text of the document, there is neither mention of the Indians nor of Patagonia! The incomplete word *indi* does not mean *Indiens*, but of course, *indigènes*, aborigines! Now, do you admit that there are aborigines in Australia?"

"Bravo, Paganel!" said the Major.

"Well, do you agree to my interpretation, my dear Lord?" asked the geographer again.

"Yes," replied Glenarvan, "if you will prove to me that the fragment of a word *gonie*, does not refer to the country of the Patagonians."

"Certainly it does not. It has nothing to do with Patagonia," said Paganel. "Read it any way you please except that."

"How?"

"*Cosmogonie, théogonie, agonie.*"

"*Agonie,*" said the Major.

"I don't care which," returned Paganel. "The word is quite unimportant; I will not even try to find out its meaning. The main point is that *Austral* means *Australie*, and we must have gone blindly on a wrong track not to have discovered the explanation at the very beginning, it was so evident. If I had found the document myself, and my judgment had not been misled by your interpretation, I should never have read it differently."

A burst of hurrahs, and congratulations, and compliments followed Paganel's words. Austin and the sailors, and the Major and Robert, most of all overjoyed

at this fresh hope, applauded him heartily; while even Glenarvan, whose eyes were gradually getting open, was almost prepared to give in.

"I only want to know one more thing, my dear Paganel," he said, "and then I must bow to your perspicacity."

"What is it?"

"How will you group the words together according to your new interpretation? How will the document read?"

"Easily enough answered. Here is the document," replied Paganel, taking out the precious paper he had been studying so conscientiously for the last few days.

For a few minutes there was complete silence, while the worthy *savant* took time to collect his thoughts before complying with his Lordship's request. Then putting his finger on the words, and emphasizing some of them, he began as follows:—

"'*Le 7 juin 1862 le trois-mâts Britannia de Glascow a sombré après,*'—put if you please, '*deux jours, trois jours,*' or '*une longue agonie,*' it doesn't signify, it is quite a matter of indifference,—'*sur les côtes de l'Australie. Se dirigeant à terre, deux matelots et le Capitaine Grant vont essayer d'aborder,*' or, '*ont abordé le continent ou ils seront,*' or, '*sont prisonniers de cruels indigènes. Ils ont jeté ce document,*' etc., etc. Is that clear?"

"Clear enough," replied Glevarvan, "if the word continent can be applied to Australia, which is only an island."

"Make yourself easy about that, my dear Glen-

arvan; the best geographers have agreed to call the island the Australian Continent."

"Then all I have now to say is, my friends," said Glenarvan, "away to Australia! and may Heaven help us!"

"To Australia!" echoed his companions with one voice.

"I tell you what, Paganel," added Glenarvan, "your being on board the *Duncan* is a perfect providence."

"All right. Look on me as a messenger of providence, and let us drop the subject."

So the conversation ended—a conversation which great results were to follow; it completely changed the moral condition of the travellers; it gave them the clue of the labyrinth in which they had thought themselves hopelessly entangled, and, amid their ruined projects, inspired them with fresh hope. They could now quit the American Continent without the least hesitation, and already their thoughts had flown to the Australias. In going on board the *Duncan* again they would not bring despair with them, and Lady Helena and Mary Grant would not have to mourn the irrevocable loss of Captain Grant. This thought so filled them with joy that they forgot all the dangers of their actual situation, and only regretted they could not start immediately.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and they determined to have supper at six. Paganel wished to get up a splendid spread in honour of the occasion, but, as the materials were very scanty, he proposed to Robert to go and hunt in the neighbouring forest. Robert

clapped his hands at the idea, so they took Thalcave's powder-flask, cleaned the revolvers, and loaded them with small shot, and set off.

"Don't go too far," said the Major, gravely, to the two hunters.

After their departure, Glenarvan and McNabbs went down to examine the state of the water by looking at the notches they had made on the tree, and Wilson and Mulrady replenished the fire.

No sign of decrease appeared on the surface of the immense lake, yet the flood seemed to have reached its maximum height; but the violence with which it rushed from south to north proved that the equilibrium of the Argentine rivers was not restored. Before getting lower the liquid mass must remain stationary, as in the case with the ocean before the ebb-tide commences.

While Glenarvan and his cousin were making these observations, the report of fire-arms resounded frequently above their heads, and the jubilant outcries of the two sportsmen, for Paganel was every whit as much a child as Robert. They were having a fine time of it among the thick leaves, judging by the peals of laughter which rang out in the boy's clear treble voice and Paganel's deep bass. The chase was evidently successful, and wonders in culinary art might be expected. Wilson had a good idea to begin with, which he had skilfully carried out; for when Glenarvan came back to the brasier, he found that the brave fellow had actually managed to catch, with only a pin and a piece of string, several dozens of small fish, as delicate as smelts,

called *mojarras,* which were all jumping about in a fold of his poncho, ready to be converted into an exquisite dish.

At the same moment, the hunters reappeared. Paganel was carefully carrying some black swallows' eggs, and a string of sparrows, which he meant to serve up later under the name of field-larks. Robert had been clever enough to bring down several brace of *hilgueros,* small green and yellow birds, which are excellent eating, and greatly in demand in the Montevideo market. Paganel, who knew fifty ways of dressing eggs, was obliged for this once to be content with simply hardening them on the hot embers. But, notwithstanding this, the viands at the meal were both dainty and varied. The dried beef, hard eggs, grilled *mojarras,* sparrows, and roast *hilgueros,* made one of those gala feasts, the memory of which is imperishable.

The conversation was very animated. Many compliments were paid Paganel on his two-fold talents as hunter and cook, which the *savant* accepted with the modesty which characterises true merit. Then he turned the conversation on the peculiarites of the *ombu,* under whose canopy they had found shelter, and whose depths he declared were immense.

"Robert and I," he added, jestingly, "thought ourselves hunting in the open forest. I was afraid, for the minute, we should lose ourselves, for I could not find the road. The sun was sinking below the horizon; I sought vainly for footmarks; I began to feel the sharp pangs of hunger, and the gloomy depths of the forest

resounded already with the roar of wild beasts. No, not that; there are no wild beasts here, I am sorry to say."

"What!" exclaimed Glenarvan, "you are sorry there are no wild beasts?"

"Certainly I am."

"And yet we should have every reason to dread their ferocity."

"Their ferocity is non-existent, scientifically speaking," replied the learned geographer.

"Now, come, Paganel," said the Major, "you'll never make me admit the utility of wild beasts. What good are they?"

"Why, Major," exclaimed Paganel, "for purposes of classification into orders, and families, and species, and sub-species."

"A mighty advantage, certainly!" replied McNabbs. "I could dispense with all that. If I had been one of Noah's companions at the time of the deluge, I should most assuredly have hindered the imprudent patriarch from putting in pairs of lions, and tigers, and panthers, and bears, and such animals, for they are as malevolent as they are useless."

"You would have done that?" asked Paganel.

"Yes, I would."

"Well, you would have done wrong in a zoological point of view," returned Paganel.

"But not in a humanitarian one," rejoined the Major.

"It is shocking!" replied Paganel. "Why, for

my part, on the contrary, I should have taken special care to preserve megatheriums and pterodactyles, and all the antediluvian species of which we are unfortunately deprived."

"And I say," returned McNabbs, "that Noah did a very good thing when he abandoned them to their fate—that is, if they lived in his day."

"And I say he did a very bad thing," retorted Paganel, "and he has justly merited the malediction of *savants* to the end of time."

The rest of the party could not help laughing at hearing the two friends disputing ove old Noah. Contrary to all his principles, the Major, who all his life had never disputed with any one, was always sparring with Paganel. The geographer seemed to have a peculiarly exciting effect on him.

Glenarvan, as usual, always the peacemaker, interered in the debate, and said—

"Whether the loss of ferocious animals is to be regretted or not, in a scientific point of view, there is no help for it now, we must be content to do without them. Paganel can hardly expect to meet with wild beasts in this ærial forest."

"Why not?" asked the geographer.

"Wild beasts on a tree!" exclaimed Tom Austin.

"Yes, undoubtedly. The American tiger, the jaguar, takes refuge in the trees, when the chase gets too hot for him. It is quite possible that one of these animals, surprised by the inundation, might have climbed

up into this *ombu,* and be hiding now among its thick foliage."

"You haven't met any of them, at any rate, I suppose?" said the Major.

"No," replied Paganel, "though we hunted all through the wood. It is vexing, for it would have been a splendid chase. A jaguar is a bloodthirsty, ferocious creature. He can twist the neck of a horse with a single stroke of his paw. When he has once tasted human flesh, he scents it greedily. He likes to eat an Indian best, and next to him a negro, then a mulatto, and last of all a white man."

"I am delighted to hear we come number four," said McNabbs.

"That only proves you are insipid," retorted Paganel, with an air of disdain.

"I am delighted to be insipid," was the Major's reply.

"Well, it is humiliating enough," said the intractable Paganel. "The white man proclaimed himself the chief of the human race; but Mr. Jaguar is of a different opinion, it seems."

"Be that as it may, my brave Paganel, seeing there are neither Indians, nor negroes, nor mulattoes among us, I am quite rejoiced at the absence of your beloved jaguars. Our situation is not so particularly agreeable."

"What! not agreeable!" exclaimed Paganel, jumping at the word as likely to give a new turn to the conversation. "You are complaining of your lot, Glenarvan."

"I should think so, indeed," replied Glenarvan.

"Do you find these uncomfortable hard branches very luxurious."

"I have never been more comfortable, even in my study. We live like the birds, we sing and fly about. I begin to believe men were intended to live on trees."

"But they want wings," suggested the Major.

"They'll make them some day."

"And till then," put in Glenarvan, "with your leave, I prefer the gravel of a park, or the floor of a house, or the deck of a ship, to this ærial dwelling."

"We must take things as they come, Glenarvan," returned Paganel. "If good, so much the better; if bad, never mind. Ah, I see you are wishing you had all the comforts of Malcolm Castle."

"No; but——"

"I am quite certain Robert is perfectly happy," interrupted Paganel, eager to ensure one partisan at least

"Yes, that I am!" exclaimed Robert, in a joyous tone.

"At his age it is quite natural," replied Glenarvan.

"And at mine, too," returned the geographer. "The fewer one's comforts, the fewer one's needs; and the fewer one's needs, the greater one's happiness."

"Now, now," said the Major, "here is Paganel running a tilt against riches and gilt ceilings."

"No, McNabbs," replied the *savant*, "I'm not; but if you like, I'll tell you a little Arabian story that comes into my mind, very *apropos* this minute."

"Oh, do, do," said Robert.

"And what is your story to prove, Paganel?" inquired the Major.

"Much what all stories prove, my brave comrade."

"Not much then," rejoined McNabbs. "But go on, Scherazade, and tell us one of the stories you tell so well."

"There was once," said Paganel, "a son of the great Haroun-al-Raschid, who was unhappy, and went to consult an old Dervish. The old sage told him that happiness was a difficult thing to find in this world. 'However,' he added, 'I know an infallible means of procuring you happiness.' 'What is it?' asked the young prince. 'It is to put the shirt of a happy man on your shoulders.' Whereupon the prince embraced the old man, and set out at once to search for his talisman. He visited all the capital cities in the world. He tried on the shirts of kings, and emperors, and princes, and nobles; but all in vain: he could not find a man among them that was happy. Then he put on the shirts of artists, and warriors, and merchants; but these were no better. By this time he had travelled a long way, without finding what he sought. At last he began to despair of success, and began sorrowfully to retrace his steps back to his father's palace, when one fine day he heard an honest peasant singing so merrily as he drove the plough, that he thought, 'Surely this man is happy, if there is such a thing as happiness on earth.' Forthwith he accosted him, and said, 'Are you happy?' 'Yes,' was the reply. 'There is nothing you desire?' 'Nothing.' 'You would not change your lot for that of a king?' 'Never!!' 'Well, then, sell me your shirt.' 'My shirt! I haven't one!'"

CHAPTER XXV.

BETWEEN FIRE AND WATER.

THE story of Jacques Paganel was a great success. They all heartily applauded it, though each kept his own opinion, and, as is generally the result of discussions, nobody was convinced. On one point, however, they were all agreed, that they must keep up a brave heart, and be content with a tree, since they had neither a palace nor a hut.

While this talk was going on, evening had come. A good sleep was the only fitting close to this exciting day. The occupants of the *ombu* were not only fatigued with their march prior to the inundation, but also with the excessive heat of the day. Their winged companions had already set them the example, for the *hilgueros*, the nightingales of the Pampas, had ceased their melodious warbling, and all the birds had disappeared beneath the dark foliage. The best thing they could do was to imitate them.

However, before turning into "their nest," as Paganel said, he, and Robert, and Glenarvan climbed up into the observatory to have one more inspection of the

liquid plain. It was about nine o'clock; the sun had just sunk behind the glowing mists of the western horizon. All this half of the celestial sphere was bathed in warm vapour, through which the constellations, brilliant as they are in the southern hemisphere, were but faintly seen, appearing confused, as if covered with light gauze. Still they were visible enough to be recognized, and Paganel pointed out several of the principal stars to his friend Robert, to the benefit of Glenarvan as well. Amongst others he showed them the Southern Cross, a group of four stars of the first and second magnitude in the Centaurus, in which the star nearest to the earth is found, being about twenty billions of miles off; and also the Clouds of Magellan, two immense nebulæ, the most extensive of which covers a space two hundred times larger than the apparent surface of the moon. Last of all he showed him the "black hole," where all stellary matter seems absolutely wanting.

To his great regret, Orion, which is seen in both hemispheres, had not yet risen; but Paganel informed his two scholars of a curious peculiarity in Patagonian cosmography. To the eyes of the poetical Indians Orion seems an immense *lazo,* and three *bolas* thrown by the hand of the hunter who roams over the celestial prairies. All these constellations were reflected in the water, and to the admiring spectators gave the impression of a double heaven.

While the learned Paganel was descanting on these topics, the eastern horizon was gradually assuming a most

stormy aspect. A thick dark bar of cloud was rising higher and higher, and by degrees extinguishing the stars. Before long half the sky was overspread. Evidently motive power lay in the cloud itself, for there was not a breath of wind. Absolute calm reigned in the atmosphere; not a leaf stirred on the tree, not a ripple disturbed the surface of the water. There seemed to be scarcely any air even, as though some vast pneumatic machine had rarefied it. The entire atmosphere was charged to the utmost with electricity, the presence of which sent a thrill through the whole nervous system of all animated beings.

"We are going to have a storm," said Paganel.

"You're not afraid of thunder, are you, Robert?" asked Glenarvan.

"No, my Lord!" exclaimed Robert.

"Well, my boy, so much the better, for a storm is not far off."

"And a violent one, too," added Paganel "if I may judge by the look of things."

"It is not the storm I care about," said Glenarvan, "so much as the torrents of rain that will accompany it. We shall be soaked to the skin. Whatever you may say, Paganel, a nest won't do for a man, and you will learn that soon, to your cost."

"With the help of philosophy, it will," replied Paganel.

"Philosophy! that won't keep you from getting drenched."

"No, but it will warm you."

"Well," said Glenarvan, "we had better go down to our friends, and advise them to wrap themselves up in their philosophy and their ponchos as tightly as possible, and, above all, to lay in a stock of patience, for we shall need it.

Glenarvan gave a last glance at the angry sky. The clouds now covered it entirely; only a dim streak of light shone faintly in the west. A dark shadow lay on the water, and it could hardly be distinguished from the thick vapours bor[illegible] There was no sensation of light or sound. All was darkness and silence around.

"Let us go down," said Glenarvan; "the thunder will soon burst over us."

On returning to the bottom of the tree, they found themselves, to their great surprise, in a sort of dim twilight, produced by myriads of luminous specks which appeared buzzing confusedly over the surface of the water.

"It is phosphorescence, I suppose," said Glenarvan.

"No, but phosphorescent insects, positive glow-worms, living diamonds, which the ladies of Buenos Ayres convert into magnificent ornaments."

"What!" exclaimed Robert, "those sparks flying about are insects!"

"Yes, my boy."

Robert caught one in his hand, and found Paganel was right. It was a kind of large drone, an inch long, and the Indians call it "tuco-tuco." This curious specimen of the *coleoptera* sheds its radiance from two spots in the front of its breastplate, and the light is

sufficient to read by. Holding his watch close to the insect, Paganel saw distinctly that the time was ten p.m.

On rejoining the Major and the three sailors, Glenarvan warned them of the approaching storm, and advised them to secure themselves in their beds of branches as firmly as possible, for there was no doubt that after the first clap of thunder the wind would become unchained, and the *ombu* would be violently shaken. Though they could not defend themselves from the waters above, they might at least keep out of the rushing current beneath.

They wished one another "good-night," though hardly daring to hope for it, and then each one rolled himself in his poncho and lay down to sleep.

But the approach of great phenomena of nature excites vague uneasiness in the heart of every sentient being, even in the most strong-minded. The whole party in the *ombu* felt agitated and oppressed, and not one of them could close his eyes. The first peal of thunder found them wide awake. It occurred about eleven p.m., and sounded like a distant rolling. Glenarvan ventured to creep out of the sheltering foliage, and made his way to the extremity of the horizontal branch to take a look round.

The deep blackness of the night was already scarified with sharp bright lines, which were reflected back by the water with unerring exactness. The clouds had rent in many parts, but noiselessly, like some soft cotton material. After attentively observing both the zenith

and horizon, Glenarvan went back to the centre of the trunk.

"Well, Glenarvan, what's your report?" asked Paganel.

"I say it is beginning in good earnest, and if it goes on so we shall have a terrible storm."

"So much the better," replied the enthusiastic Paganel; "I should like a grand exhibition, since we can't run away."

"That's another of your theories," said the Major.

"And one of my best, McNabbs. I am of Glenarvan's opinion, that the storm will be superb. Just a minute ago, when I was trying to sleep, several facts occurred to my memory, that make me hope it will, for we are in the region of great electrical tempests. For instance, I have read somewhere, that in 1793, in this very province of Buenos Ayres, thunder fell thirty-seven times during one single storm. My colleague, M. Martin de Moussy, counted fifty-five minutes of uninterrupted rolling."

"Watch in hand?" asked the Major.

"Watch in hand. Only one thing makes me uneasy," added Paganel, "if it is any use to be uneasy, and that is, that the culminating point of this plain, is just this very *ombu* where we are. A lightning conductor would be very serviceable to us at present. For it is this tree especially, among all that grow in the Pampas, that the thunder has a particular affection for. Besides, I need not tell you, friend, that learned men tell us never to take refuge under trees during a storm."

"Most seasonable advice, certainly, in our circumstances," said the Major.

"I must confess, Paganel," replied Glenarvan, "that you might have chosen a better time for this reassuring information."

"Bah!" replied Paganel, "all times are good for getting information. Ha! now it's beginning."

Louder peals of thunder interrupted this inopportune conversation, the violence increasing with the noise till the whole atmosphere seemed to vibrate with rapid oscillations.

The incessant flashes of lightning took various forms. Some darted down perpendicularly from the sky five or six times in the same place in succession. Others would have excited the interest of a *savant* to the highest degree, for though Arago, in his curious statistics only cites two examples of forked lightning, it was visible here hundreds of times. Some of the flashes branched out in a thousand different directions, making coralliform zigzags, and threw out wonderful jets of arborescent light.

Soon the whole sky from east to north seemed supported by a phosphoric band of intense brilliancy. This kept increasing by degrees till it overspread the entire horizon, kindling the clouds as if they were masses of combustible matter, which were faithfully mirrored in the waters beneath, and presented the appearance of an immense globe of fire, the centre of which was the *ombu*.

Glenarvan and his companions gazed silently at this terrifying spectacle. They could not make their

voices heard, but the sheets of white light which enwrapped them every now and then, revealed the face of one and another, sometimes the calm features of the Major, sometimes the eager, curious glance of Paganel, or the energetic face of Glenarvan, and at others, the scared eyes of the terrified Robert, and the careless looks of the sailors, investing them with a weird, spectral aspect.

However, as yet, no rain had fallen, and the wind had not risen in the least. But this state of things was of short duration; before long the cataracts of the sky burst forth, and came down in vertical streams. As the large drops fell splashing into the lake, fiery sparks seemed to fly out from the illumined surface.

Was this rain the *finale* of the storm? If so, Glenarvan and his companions would escape scot free, except for a few vigorous douche baths. No. At the very height of this struggle of the electric forces of the astmosphere, a large ball of fire appeared suddenly at the extremity of the horizontal parent branch, as thick as a man's wrist, and surrounded with black smoke. This ball, after turning round and round for a few seconds, burst like a bomb-shell, and with so much noise that the explosion was distinctly audible above the general *fracas*. A sulphurous smoke filled the air, and complete silence reigned till the voice of Tom Austin was heard shouting,

"The tree is on fire."

Tom was right. In a moment, as if some fireworks were being ignited, the flame ran along the west

side of the *ombu;* the dead wood and nests of dried grass, and the whole sap, which was of a spongy texture, supplied food for its devouring activity.

The wind had risen now and fanned the flame. It was time to flee, and Glenarvan and his party hurried away to the eastern side of their refuge, which was meantime untouched by the fire. They were all silent, troubled, and terrified, as they watched branch after branch shrivel, and crack, and writhe in the flame like living serpents, and then drop into the swollen torrent still red and gleaming, as it was borne swiftly along on the rapid current. The flames sometimes rose to a prodigious height, and seemed almost lost in the atmosphere, and sometimes, beaten down by the hurricane, closely enveloped the *ombu* like a robe of Nessus. Terror seized the entire group. They were almost suffocated with smoke, and scorched with the unbearable heat, for the conflagration had already reached the lower branches on their side of the *ombu.* To extinguish it or check its progress was impossible, and they saw themselves irrevocably condemned to a torturing death, like the victims of Hindoo divinities.

At last, their situation was absolutely intolerable. Of the two deaths staring them in the face they had better choose the less cruel.

"To the water!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

Wilson, who was nearest the flames, had already plunged into the lake, but next minute he screamed out in the most violent terror,

"Help! help!"

Austin rushed towards him, and with the assistance of the Major, dragged him up again on the tree.

"What's the matter?" they asked.

"Alligators! alligators?" replied Wilson.

The whole foot of the tree appeared to be surrounded by these formidable animals of the Saurian order. By the glare of the flames, they were immediately recognized by Paganel, as the ferocious species peculiar to America, called *Caimans* in the Spanish territories. About ten of them were there, lashing the water with their powerful tails, and attacking the *ombu* with the long teeth of their lower jaw.

At this sight the unfortunate men gave themselves up for lost. A frightful death was in store for them, since they must either be devoured by the fire or by the caimans. Even the Major said, in a calm voice—

"This is the beginning of the end now."

There are circumstances in which men are powerless, when the unchained elements can only be combated by other elements. Glenarvan gazed with haggard looks at the fire and water leagued against him, hardly knowing what deliverance to implore from Heaven.

The violence of the storm had abated, but it had developed in the atmosphere a considerable quantity of vapours, to which electricity was about to communicate immense force. An enormous water-spout was gradually forming in the south—a cone of thick mists, but with the point at the bottom, and base at the top, linking together the turbulent waters and the angry clouds. This meteor soon began to move forwards,

turning over and over on itself with dizzy rapidity, and sweeping up into its centre a column of water from the lake, while its gyratory motions made all the surrounding currents of air rush towards it.

A few seconds more, and the gigantic water-spout threw itself on the *ombu,* and caught it up in its whirl. The tree shook to its roots. Glenarvan could fancy the caimans' teeth were tearing it up from the soil; for as he and his companions held on, each clinging firmly to the other, they felt the towering *ombu* give way, and next minute it fell right over with a terrible hissing noise, as the flaming branches touched the foaming water.

It was the work of an instant. Already the water-spout had passed, to carry on its destructive work elsewhere. It seemed to empty the lake in its passage, by continually drawing up the water into itself.

The *ombu* now began to drift rapidly along, impelled by wind and current. All the caimans had taken their departure, except one that was crawling over the upturned roots, and coming towards the poor refugees with wide open jaws. But Mulrady, seizing hold of a branch that was half burnt off, struck the monster such a tremendous blow, that it fell back into the torrent and disappeared, lashing the water with its formidable tail.

Glenarvan and his companions being thus delivered from the voracious *saurians,* stationed themselves on the branches windward of the conflagration, while the *ombu* sailed along like a blazing fireship through the dark night, the flames spreading themselves round like sails before the breath of the hurricane.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE ATLANTIC.

For two hours, the *ombu* navigated the immense lake without reaching *terra firma*. The flames which were devouring it had gradually died out. The chief danger of their frightful passage was thus removed, and the Major went the length of saying that he should not be surprised if they were saved after all.

The direction of the current remained unchanged, always running from south-west to north-east. Profound darkness had again set in, only illumined here and there by a parting flash of lightning. The storm was nearly over. The rain had given place to light mists, which a breath of wind dispersed, and the heavy masses of cloud had separated, and now streaked the sky in long bands.

The *ombu* was borne onward so rapidly by the impetuous torrent, that any one might have supposed some powerful locomotive engine was hidden in its trunk. It seemed likely enough they might continue drifting in this way for days. About three o'clock in the morning, however, the Major noticed that the roots

were beginning to graze the ground occasionally, and by sounding the depth of the water with a long branch, Tom Austin found that they were getting on rising ground. Twenty minutes afterwards, the *ombu* stopped short with a violent jolt.

"Land! land!" shouted Paganel, in a ringing tone.

The extremity of the calcined bough had struck some hillock, and never were sailors more glad; the rock to them was the port.

Already Robert and Wilson had leaped on to the solid plateau with a loud joyful hurrah! when a well-know whistle was heard. The gallop of a horse resounded over the plain, and the tall form of Thalcave emerged from the darkness.

"Thalcave! Thalcave!" they all cried with one voice.

"*Amigos!*" replied the Patagonian, who had been waiting for the travellers here in the same place where the current had landed himself.

As he spoke he lifted up Robert in his arms and hugged him to his breast, never imagining that Paganel was hanging on to him. A general and hearty hand-shaking followed, and everyone rejoiced at seeing their faithful guide again. Then the Patagonian led the way into the *hangar* of a deserted *estancia*, where there was a good blazing fire to warm them, and a substantial meal of fine, juicy slices of venison soon broiling, of which they did not leave a crumb. When their minds had calmed down a little, and they were able to

reflect on the dangers they had come through from flood, and fire, and alligators, they could scarcely believe they had escaped.

Thalcave, in a few words, gave Paganel an account of himself since they parted, entirely ascribing his deliverance to his intrepid horse. Then Paganel tried to make him understand their new interpretation of the document, and the consequent hopes they were indulging. Whether the Indian actually understood his ingenious hypotheses was a question; but he saw that they were glad and confident, and that was enough for him.

As can easily be imagined, after their compulsory rest on the *ombu,* the travellers were up betimes and ready to start. At eight o'clock they set off. No means of transport being procurable so far south, they were compelled to walk. However, it was not more than forty miles now that they had to go, and Thaouka would not refuse to give a lift occasionally to a tired pedestrian, or even to a couple at a pinch. In thirty-six hours they might reach the shores of the Atlantic.

The low-lying tract of marshy ground still under water, soon lay behind them, as Thalcave led them upward to the higher plains. Here the Argentine territory resumed its monotonous aspect. A few clumps of trees, planted by European hands, might chance to be visible among the pasturage, but quite as rarely as in Tandil and Tapalquem Sierras. The native trees are only found on the edge of long prairies and about Cape Corrientes.

Next day, though still fifteen miles distant, the proximity of the ocean was sensibly felt. The *virazon*, a peculiar wind, which blows regularly half of the day and night, bent down the heads of the tall grasses. Thinly planted woods rose to view, and small tree-like mimosas, bushes of acacia, and tufts of *curra-mantel.* Here and there, shining like pieces of broken glass, there were salinous lagoons, which increased the difficulty of the journey as the travellers had to wind round them to get past. They pushed on as quickly as possible, hoping to reach Lake Salado, on the shores of the ocean the same day; and at 8 p.m., when they found themselves in front of the sand hills 200 feet high, which skirt the coast, they were all tolerably tired. But when the long murmur of the distant ocean fell on their ears, the exhausted men forgot their fatigue, and ran up the sand-hills with surprising agility. But it was getting quite dark already, and their eager gaze could discover no traces of the *Duncan* on the gloomy expanse of water that met their sight.

"But she is there, for all that," exclaimed Glenarvan, "waiting for us, and running alongside."

"We shall see her to-morrow," replied McNabbs.

Tom Austin hailed the invisible yacht, but there was no response. The wind was very high and the sea rough. The clouds were scudding along from the west, and the spray of the waves dashed up even to the sand-hills. It was little wonder, then, if the man on look-out could neither hear nor make himself heard, supposing the *Duncan* were there. There was no

shelter on the coast for her, neither bay nor cove, nor port; not so much as a creek. The shore was composed of sand-banks which ran out into the sea, and were more dangerous to approach than rocky shoals. The sand-banks irritate the waves, and make the sea so particularly rough, that in heavy weather, vessels that run aground there are invariably dashed to pieces.

Naturally enough, then, the *Duncan* would keep far enough away from such a coast; John Mangles was too prudent a captain to get near. Tom Austin, indeed, was of the opinion that she would be obliged to keep five miles out.

The Major advised his impatient relative to resign himself to circumstances. Since there was no means of dissipating the darkness, what was the use of straining his eyes by vainly endeavouring to pierce through it.

He set to work immediately to prepare the night's encampment beneath the shelter of the sand-hills; the last provisions supplied the last meal, and afterwards, each, following the Major's example, scooped out a hole in the sand, which made a comfortable enough bed, and then covered himself with the soft material up to his chin, and fell into a heavy sleep.

But Glenarvan kept watch. There was still a stiff breeze of wind, and the ocean had not recovered its equilibrium after the recent storm. The waves, at all times tumultuous, now broke over the sand-banks with a noise like thunder. Glenarvan could not rest, knowing the *Duncan* was so near him. As to supposing

she had not arrived at the appointed rendezvous, that was out of the question. Glenarvan had left the Bay of Talcahuano on the 14th of October, and arrived on the shores of the Atlantic on the 12th of November. He had taken thirty days to cross Chili, the Cordillera, the Pampas, and the Argentine plain, giving the *Duncan* ample time to double Cape Horn, and arrive on the opposite side. For such a fast runner there were no impediments. Certainly the storm had been very violent, and its fury must have been terrible on such a vast battle-field as the Atlantic, but the yacht was a good ship, and the captain was a good sailor. He was bound to be there, and he would be there.

These reflections, however, did not calm Glenarvan. When the heart and the reason are struggling, it is generally the heart that wins the mastery. The laird of Malcolm Castle felt the presence of loved ones about him in the darkness, as he wandered up and down the lonely strand. He gazed, and listened, and even fancied he caught occasional glimpses of a faint light.

"I am not mistaken," he said to himself; "I saw a ship's light, one of the lights on the *Duncan!* Oh! why can't I see in the dark!"

All at once the thought rushed across him that Paganel said he was a nyctalops, and could see at night. He must go and wake him.

The learned geographer was sleeping as sound as a mole. A strong arm pulled him up out of the sand and made him call out—

"Who goes there?"

"It is I, Paganel."

"Who."

"Glenarvan. Come, I need your eyes."

"My eyes," replied Paganel, rubbing them vigorously.

"Yes, I need your eyes to make out the *Duncan* in this darkness? so come."

"Confound the nyctalopia!" said Paganel inwardly, though delighted to be of any service to his friend.

He got up and shook his stiffened limbs, and stretching and yawning as most people do when roused from sleep, followed Glenarvan to the beach.

Glenarvan begged him to examine the distant horizon across the sea, which he did most conscientiously for some minutes.

"Well, do you see nothing?" asked Glenarvan.

"Not a thing. Even a cat couldn't see two steps before her."

"Look for a red light or a green one—her larboard or starboard light."

"I see neither a red nor a green light, all is pitch dark," replied Paganel, his eyes involuntarily beginning to close.

For half an hour he followed his impatient friend, mechanically letting his head frequently drop on his chest, and raising it again with a start. At last he neither answered nor spoke, and he reeled about like a drunken man. Glenarvan looked at him, and found he was sound asleep!

Without attempting to wake him, he took his arm,

led him back to his hole, and buried him again comfortably.

At dawn next morning, all the slumberers started to their feet and rushed to the shore, shouting, "Hurrah, hurrah!" as Lord Glenarvan's loud cry, "The *Duncan*, the *Duncan!*" broke upon their ear.

There she was, five miles out, her courses carefully reefed, and her steam half up. Her smoke was lost in the morning mist. The sea was so violent, that a vessel of her tonnage could not have ventured safely nearer the sand-banks.

Glenarvan, by the aid of Paganel's telescope, closely observed the movements of the yacht. It was evident that John Mangles had not perceived his passengers, for he continued his course as before.

But at this very moment Thalcave fired his carbine in the direction of the yacht. They listened and looked, but no signal of recognition was returned. A second and a third time the Indian fired, awakening the echoes amongst the sand-hills.

At last a white smoke was seen issuing from the side of the yacht.

"They see us!" exclaimed Glenarvan. "That's the cannon of the *Duncan*."

A few seconds, and the heavy boom of the cannon came across the water and died away on the shore. The sails were instantly altered, and the steam got up, so as to get as near the coast as possible.

Presently, through the glass, they saw a boat lowered.

"Lady Helena will not be able to come," said Tom Austin. "It is too rough."

"Nor John Mangles," added McNabbs; "he cannot leave the ship."

"My sister, my sister!" cried Robert, stretching out his arms towards the yacht, which was now rolling violently.

"Oh, how I wish I could get on board!" said Glenarvan.

"Patience, Edward! you will be there in a couple of hours" replied the Major.

Two hours! But it was impossible for a boat—a six-oared one— to come and go in a shorter space of time.

Glenarvan went back to Thalcave, who stood beside Thaouka, with his arms crossed, looking quietly at the troubled waves.

Glenarvan took his hand, and pointing to the yacht said—

"Come!"

The Indian gently shook his head.

"Come, friend," repeated Glenarvan.

"No," said Thalcave, gently. "Here is Thaouka, and there—the Pampas," he added, embracing with a passionate gesture the wide stretching prairies.

Glenarvan understood his refusal. He knew that the Indian would never forsake the prairie, where the bones of his fathers were whitening, and he knew the religious attachment of these sons of the desert for their native land. He did not urge Thalcave longer, therefore, but simply pressed his hand. Nor could he

find it in his heart to insist, when the Indian, smiling as usual, would not accept the price of his services, pushing back the money, and saying—

"For the sake of friendship."

Glenarvan could not reply; but he wished, at least, to leave the brave fellow some *souvenir* of his European friends. What was there to give, however? Arms, horses, everything had been destroyed in the unfortunate inundation, and his friends were no richer than himself.

He was quite at a loss how to show his recognition of the disinterestedness of this noble guide, when a happy thought struck him. He had an exquisite portrait of Lady Helena in his pocket, a *chef-d'œuvre* of Lawrence. This he drew out, and offered to Thalcave, simply saying—

"My wife."

The Indian gazed at it with a softened eye, and said—

"Good and beautiful."

Then Robert, and Paganel, and the Major, and the rest, exchanged touching farewells with the faithful Patagonian. Thalcave embraced them each, and pressed them to his broad chest. Paganel made him accept a map of South America and the two oceans, which he had often seen the Indian looking at with interest. It was the most precious thing the geographer possessed. As for Robert, he had only caresses to bestow, and these he lavished on his friend, not forgetting to give a share to Thaouka.

The boat from the *Duncan* was now fast approaching, and in another minute had glided into a narrow channel between the sand-banks, and run ashore.

"My wife?" were Glenarvan's first words.

"My sister?" said Robert.

"Lady Helena and Miss Grant are waiting for you on board," replied the coxswain; "but lose no time, your honour, we have not a minute, for the tide is beginning to ebb already."

The last kindly adieux were spoken, and Thalcave accompanied his friends to the boat, which had been pushed back into the water. Just as Robert was going to step in, the Indian took him in his arms, and gazed tenderly into his face. Then he said—

"Now go. You are a man!"

"Good-bye, good-bye, friend!" said Glenarvan, once more.

"Shall we never see each other again?" Paganel called out.

"*Quien sabe?*" (Who knows?) replied Thalcave, lifting his arms towards heaven.

These were the Indian's last words, dying away on the breeze, as the boat receded gradually from the shore. For a long time his dark, motionless *silhouette* stood out against the sky through the white dashing spray of the waves. Then by degrees his tall figure began to diminish in size, till at length his friends of a day lost sight of him altogether.

An hour afterwards, Robert was the first to leap on board the *Duncan*. He flung his arms round Mary's

neck, amidst the loud, joyous hurrahs of the crew on the yacht.

Thus the journey across South America was accomplished, the given line of march being scrupulously adhered to throughout. Neither mountains nor rivers had made the travellers change their course; and though they had not had to encounter any ill-will from men, their generous intrepidity had been often enough roughly put to the proof by the fury of the unchained elements.

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which, after great time and trouble, has been especially prepared for the use of golden-haired children and fair or grey-haired adults. Sizes 3s. 6d.; 7s.; family bottles, equal to four small, 10s. 6d.; and double that size, 21s.

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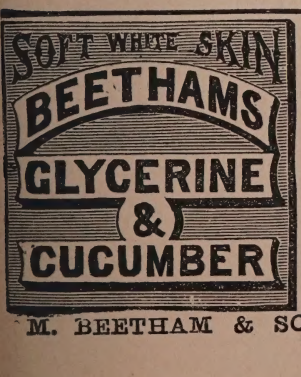

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